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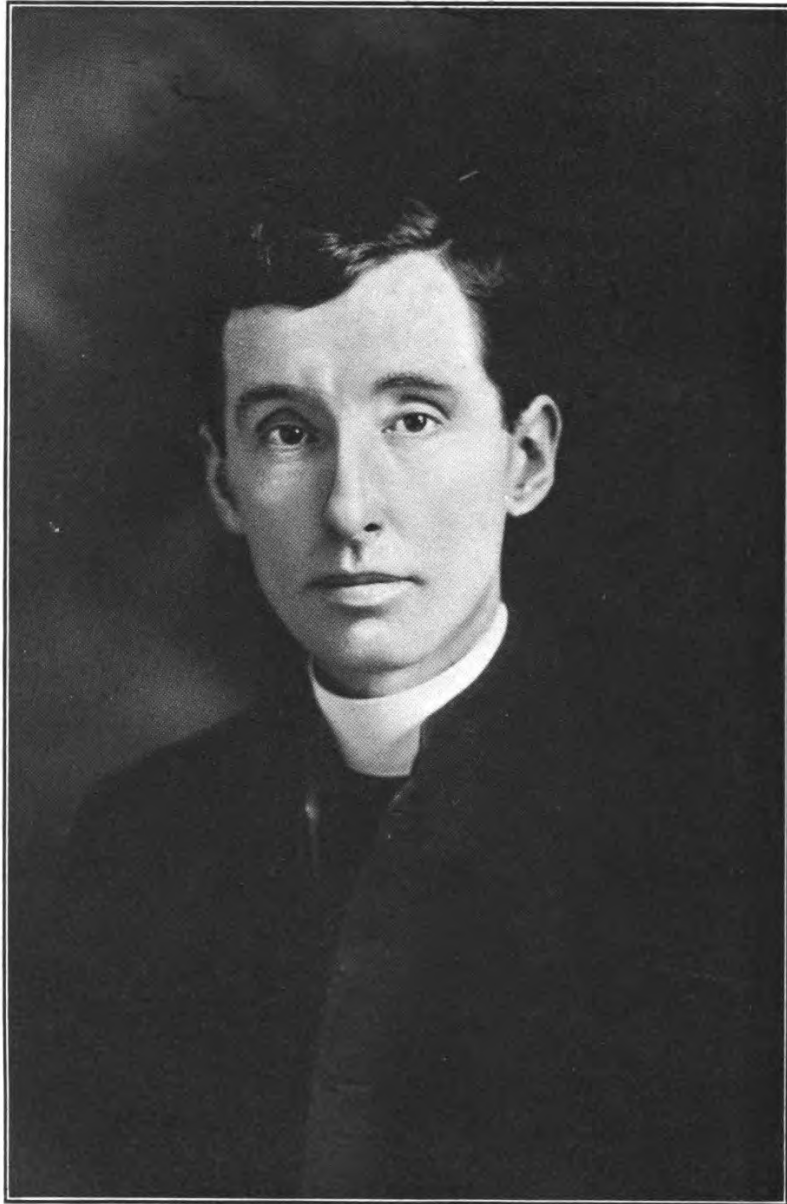
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*Very sincerely yours,
J. J. Bent.*

STRANGER THAN FICTION

A SERIES OF
SHORT STORIES

BY
THE REV. JOHN J. BENT

SOUVENIR EDITION

MATTHEW F. SHEEHAN CO.
17-19 BEACH STREET
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**TO
MY MOTHER**

Preface

WITH the exception of necessary changes and omissions the stories narrated in the following pages are substantially true. Some of the incidents came under the personal observation of the writer; the others are vouched for by unquestionable authority.

THE AUTHOR

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STRANGER THAN FICTION

The Supreme Test

THE friendship of Father Lyman and Cecil Fenton dated back to the time when they were students together at Oxford. From the first moment of their meeting, Cecil had conceived a warm attachment for his gifted young fellow-countryman, who had won the scholarship which entitled him to an enviable place among the students of the famous university. The friendship continued until Tom Lyman went to Rome to prepare for the priesthood and Cecil Fenton to Paris to study art.

It was a curious coincidence that thus brought them together on a Boston bound steamer after all those years: the one an humble priest in a tenement district of

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New York, the other a world renowned artist. As they had numerous tastes in common, they found many subjects of mutual interest to discuss during the voyage, but it pained Father Lyman to learn that there was a wide divergence in their religious views. Cecil, the only child of agnostic parents, had no belief. Fresh from the Latin Quarter of Paris, he admitted nothing that he could not see or touch, and politely scoffed at all forms of "religious twaddle."

It was the fourth day of the voyage. Father Lyman paused in his early morning walk on the deck to take in anew the beauty of the mid-Atlantic. At the same moment the sun peeped over the horizon of sea and sky, from which it sent a path of gold to the side of the vessel. Never had Father Lyman seen anything to compare with that fiery ribbon of carpet laid

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by the Great Designer on the shimmering field of ocean green.

"A penny for your thoughts, *mon père*," interrupted a voice at his side as a young man emerged from the shadow of the stairway.

"*Cæli enarrant gloriam Dei*, and I was thinking of Him," responded the priest.

"Hercule," exclaimed Cecil, with an air of mock misery, "now I am in for it. An ante-prandium sermon at 6 A.M. Fasting and prayer. Well, *commencez, mon père*," he concluded with such a comical gesture of resignation that Father Lyman laughed.

In a few moments, however, his face grew grave, and pointing to the scene before them, he said:

"Just before you came I was wondering how that golden pathway into the heart of the rising sun is so typical of another

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pathway into the heart of the Risen Son. Remark, too," he added, "notwithstanding its matchless beauty, this aureate highway seems to be avoided by those birds flying on each side of it. They appear to prefer the shadows to the blinding light — like some of my friends," he broke off suddenly with a pointed look at his companion.

"That is an argument for the birds, Father, for why should they become acquainted with a brighter atmosphere when it is only ephemeral, like man's emotions in regard to the supernatural? Better not to know a brighter plane than to find it for a space, and then, in the hour of trial, to be doubly blinded by the fall to original darkness. Moreover — I will presume on our friendship to speak plainly — I am convinced that were even you to depend upon these lofty ideals in a real crisis, they

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would crumble and fade just as your matchless highway has vanished."

Father Lyman was silent a moment before he answered.

"You mistake the shadow for the substance, Cecil. The emotions to which you refer are merely accidental, and in no way essential to true devotion, which consists in willing, not feeling, depending on the intellect rather than on the heart. As to the stability of such devotion, surely you are not ignorant that countless martyrs have laid down their lives for their belief, and those ideals you deem so vaporous never failed them in time of extreme need."

"That is doubtless true of other men in other times when circumstances were different, but I would have to see with my bodily eyes, especially in this modern country, a sane man who would forfeit

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his life for such an uncertain element as the supernatural."

"Truth is unchangeable," answered Father Lyman, "and men vary little in any age. I am convinced that were New York to become a pagan Rome to-morrow, history would repeat itself in the martyrs of her Coliseum."

Cecil shook his head negatively and Father Lyman continued:

"You would not condemn as insane our fellow-countrymen who gave up their lives in the recent war for principles less ennobling than those which inspired the martyrs of God's army?"

"The comparison seems to me to be defective; for I can readily understand a man rushing to death to defend 'Old Glory.' That is something concrete."

"The flag is only the symbol of the principle for which they died. The prin-

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ciple is no more concrete than those symbolized by the standard of the Cross."

"But," protested Cecil, "patriotism, love of country, is so tangible, so natural, that one readily admits the reasonableness of dying for it; but I cannot believe that a man of reason would do the same, influenced solely by the love of a God whom he has never seen, or charity towards a neighbor whom he knows not — your two fundamental principles! Are they not?"

"Yes," assented the priest, as if recognizing the futility of further argument, "the principles of Christ the Lawgiver, that can count on the blood of loyal supporters as long as the world shall last."

"Let me have an ocular demonstration of their potency in this selfish age, and you can count another convert."

"If that be a prayer it may be answered," rejoined Father Lyman as they entered

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the dining hall in answer to the breakfast bell.

Many were the forensic encounters which the zealous priest had provoked with his old classmate, but apparently his logic and eloquence had failed to make any impression on his pagan friend. Yet there were times when the remembrance of the young priest's face, illumined by the intensity of his pleading, and the memory of his burning words combined to stir an indefinable something deep down in the artist's soul.

Such had been the case this morning, and as Cecil paced the moon-lit deck long after his customary hour of retiring, he almost savagely admitted to himself that never before had his thoughts wandered into such strange regions. He had asked for a proof of the supernatural. What if it should be given to him! Did he really

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want material evidence that Lyman's "twaddle" was the deepest and truest philosophy in the world? Was not Lyman himself abundant proof of it? Young, handsome, endowed with more talent than he had ever seen evidenced in one individual, and yet — bound by solemn vows to a life of angelic virtue to be lived amongst the poor and wretched in the fetid atmosphere of a New York slum.

"Bah!" he exclaimed, as he tossed away his half-smoked cigar, "it is the law of contrast: sentimentality of a rare order sustained by sensations made attractive by repugnance."

With this comforting conclusion he dismissed the bogey that had begun to disturb him and retired to his stateroom.

It seemed to Cecil that he had been asleep only a few minutes when he was awakened by the noise of hurrying feet

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and a confusion of voices. Hastily dressing, he hurried to the deck, where he encountered Father Lyman.

"Anything serious?" he questioned.

"Very serious," gravely responded the priest, "the ship has struck a large iceberg."

"Lively, now, gentlemen, jump in," sharply commanded an officer who had been superintending the lowering of a life-boat near where they stood. Both men seemed unwilling to accept the invitation, seeing which the officer angrily exclaimed: "There is no time to lose, the ship is sinking, and this is the last boat."

"But there are still many people in the steerage," protested Father Lyman.

"Hundreds of them," he curtly responded. Then, as if in apology, he added: "There is no time nor chance to reach them now, sir; besides this boat has its

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complement with you two. Now, then, quickly."

Cecil was already in the boat, and the officer held out his hand to assist Father Lyman to the only remaining seat. The ship was settling rapidly, and the cold, dark water seemed horribly close. For one brief instant the priest hesitated as the thought of self-preservation arose to his mind. At the same moment the wails and cries from the other end of the vessel fell upon his ear — the thought of safety yielded place to the instinct of the priest.

"One moment, officer, please." Then turning to Cecil he held out his hand. "This is the end, Cecil, my duty is here. Good-by, and —"

With a leap Cecil was on his feet.

"Lyman, are you mad? This is your only chance for life. I beg of you! Let me out!"

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“Lower away, men!”

Gently pushing Cecil back into the already moving boat, Father Lyman hurriedly said:

“No, Cecil, no! You are not ready yet. God bless you — and guide you to the ‘matchless highway’!”

With a parting handshake Father Lyman stepped back and watched the boat descend to safety. Then he hastened towards the steerage and — death.

The hours which followed will never be forgotten by those who witnessed from the life-boats the sinking of the “Last-word.” Women fainted or grew hysterical. Strong men wept like children to see the helpless hundreds who were meeting death before their eyes, and whom they were powerless to aid.

Cecil, as if oblivious to his immediate surroundings, sat in his boat with his eyes

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strained towards the fast disappearing wreck. In a vague way he felt sorry for all the unfortunate sufferers, but his predominant thought was of Lyman and — the supernatural. For the first time in his thirty-five years of life he had been confronted with that invisible power, the existence of which he had vigorously denied.

In the presence of the awful scene of destruction before him, he was strangely conscious that human skill and foresight were the mere playthings of a superior science. In a dim protesting way he marshalled his cherished sophisms, but they seemed pitifully incompetent when arrayed on the line of demarcation where man's work ends and God's begins. His Penates, creations of his proud intellect, which had hitherto satisfied all inquiry, were tottering before the searching, searing ray of truth enkindled by the Spirit of Love,

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through the parting hand-clasp of a martyr priest.

With the presumption of an unbeliever, Cecil had asked for a proof of the supernatural, and he had been taken at his word. Didymus had made the same request and had been shown the death-wound received for love of man, while he was gazing even now on a death embraced for the selfsame motive.

There he stood, calm and erect, as his Master must have stood in the storm-tossed bark of Peter. A silhouette against the reddening eastern sky, he seemed the one reality of all the horrible nightmare. Around him knelt those for whom he had made his sublime sacrifice.

Slowly but with awful certainty the outline of the great ship grew less and less. Still the tall figure of the priest could be seen passing amongst the huddled

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groups. His last action was typical of his character and calling. With his uplifted hand he solemnly made the sign of redemption and forgiveness above the prostrate forms, then the waters closed above him, and the great act of love was consummated. Almost unconsciously Cecil threw himself upon his knees. As his sobbing prayer went Heavenward with the soul of his noble friend, the rising sun sent a path of crimson over the grave of Father Lyman and enshrouded the kneeling figure of his classmate in the golden halo of a new-born day.

Heaven had granted her new saint's prayer, and Cecil Fenton had found the "matchless highway."

The Fulfillment of a Prophecy

CON CAHILL sat on his front doorstep enjoying the ease that forty years of labor had brought him. His neat little cottage, carefully kept lawn and cement walk up to the front door were the pride of his heart. Con should have been happy, if a fair portion of this world's goods, a good wife and a large family constitute the only essentials of true happiness. As he sat and smoked his evening pipe some such thought as this ran through his mind and caused him to exclaim, "I am the most contented man in the town." Yet in spite of his stout affirmation Con's heart told him that he should have said

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“I might be” instead of “I am.” But that would have been a concession of weakness in the solemn promise that he had made some twenty years before “never to darken the church door as long as he lived.”

Con alleged that the cause of his perversion was due to old Father Richard's preference of a rival contractor at the building of the new church. When Father Richards called on Con to inquire why he did not go to Mass, he was met by a scornful denunciation that would have been insulting if Con were other than densely ignorant.

“What! go to a church built by Tim Murtagh — begob 'tis afraid it 'ud fall on me I'd be . . . Inagh! they say a priest is a priest to all, but blood is thicker than water, yer reverence, and every wan knows yer father an mother kem from the

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same county in Ireland as Tim Murtagh. A Corkman couldn't build a Kerryman's church, and begob 'tis the Corkman that won't go to it."

In vain did Mrs. Cahill remonstrate with her angry spouse for "goin' agin the priest." In vain did the gentle priest use all possible means to show that he had decided the contract according to strict justice. The wound to Con Cahill's professional dignity refused to be healed.

All that was long ago. Father Richards and Tim Murtagh are now sleeping peacefully in the shadow of the "Kerryman's church" that they had built together. Father Hanley, the succeeding pastor, had also tried to mollify the obdurate Con, but without any success. Father O'Donnell, the new assistant, was anxious to meet Con in spite of the discouraging reports he heard from the pastor. Taking

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up the census book he started this particular evening to visit the Cahill cottage. Con was still sitting on the porch, and the eye of suspicion that he cast on the young priest coming up the cement walk was not reassuring.

"I am Father O'Donnell, and I am taking up the Catholic census," the priest introduced himself.

"My name is Con Cahill, and I am not a Catholic," was the gruff reply.

"'Tis a Catholic he was born and brought up, yer reverence," interrupted a voice from the interior of the house. Then the owner of the voice appeared in the doorway, and the priest was amused to hear the pleasant-faced old lady making an apology for her husband even as she scolded him.

"Take that pipe out of yer mouth. You lost yer manners when you lost yer

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faith, an' whatever good there was in you went with the grace of God. Come in, Father, and don't mind the disrespect of thot omadaun."

Father O'Donnell entered the little sitting room and mentally noted that Con's perversion had not extended to the iconoclastic stage, for the pictures of St. Patrick and Father "Tom" Burke regarded each other from opposite walls.

"'Tis meself that is glad ye called, Father," said Mrs. Cahill, as she brushed some invisible dust from the best chair. "They do be saying," she continued after the priest was seated, "that you are a saint, and maybe 'tis God's answer to me prayers that sent you here to work a miracle on that misfortunate man."

Father O'Donnell was touched by her evident distress. "A saint I am not, neither can I work miracles," he dis-

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claimed, "but God's mercy is great and we will hope for the best. Ask your husband to come in." After some persuasion that was audible to Father O'Donnell, Con was brought in hatless and pipeless.

Father O'Donnell, pen in hand, was regarding the census book. After a pretended examination of it he looked up with a bright smile.

"Why, Mr. Cahill, I see by this report that you came from the county Cork."

"'Tis true," was the brief response.

"What part?" questioned the priest with a show of eagerness.

"Corrigrhu in the townland of Balligillistown."

"Then you knew Father O'Donnell of Corrigrhu?"

"I did well," said Con thawing out a little.

"He was a relative of mine, so my

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people came from the same townslan
as you did."

"Tare an ouns! if you're wan of the
O'Donnells o' Corrighu, you're welcome,"
exclaimed Con offering his hand.

"I have something to tell you before I take
your hand," said Father O'Donnell gently.

"Bedad, ye are all alike wanst ye put
on the roundy collar — there is no good
in any of ye," said Con stiffening up again.

"Yes, we are all alike. I agree with you,
so take down those pictures of St. Patrick
and Father Burke —"

"Take thim down is it," blazed forth
Con, "thim that we brought wid us forty
years ago from the Mission in Corrighu
— may me hand rot if I do, or dare any one
touch thim as long as I'm on the airth."

"But they were both priests and couldn't
be good according to what you say,"
insisted Father O'Donnell.

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“Aye, they wor but they wor Irish priests, an’ an Irish priest couldn’t be anything but good,” retorted Con fighting to the last ditch.

“But I am a born Irishman ordained in Ireland,” smiled Father O’Donnell.

“I’ll stick to me wurd thin,” blurted Con. “You must be good.”

“Now we are beginning to understand each other, we will shake hands.” No sooner had the ceremony of hand shaking been performed than Mrs. Cahill, who had been a silent listener to the conversation, threw up her hands and piously exclaimed, “Thanks an’ praise be to the Blessed Trinity now and fer ever more. Amen.”

“What’s the matter wid the woman?” asked Con in some anxiety.

“Matter wid me,” she echoed, “’deed ’tis yourself that’ll soon know an ’tis a happy man the news will make you.”

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Then turning to the priest she continued, "Begging yer riverence's pardon, ye see me ould man here, while he lost his faith in Tim Murtagh's church, never lost his faith in the 'prophecies iv the House iv O'Donnell.'"

"They all kem true," put in Con as if in defense.

"Av coorse they did from 'the white horse' to the 'blue-haired banshee,' but there is wan av them that never cum to me mind till the minnit I saw his reverence shake your hand."

"What wan was it?" asked Con with increasing interest.

"The prophecy of the 'White Hand av O'Donnell,'" slowly pronounced his wife.

"I never heeard av it," said Con with a puzzled frown.

"Well, I heeard av it and tould it to you forty years ago, but there is so much

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wickedness in your ould head that you can't mind it."

"Is it wan av the genooan 'prophecies'?" queried Con, still in doubt.

"'Tis more genooan than all the rest, for it never fails whin the conditions are present," said his spouse with such an air of conviction that Con was satisfied.

"What is the prophecy, Mrs. Cahill?" asked Father O'Donnell, interested in spite of himself.

Mrs. Cahill stood up. Raising her right hand and closing her eyes she slowly and impressively repeated the words of the "prophecy": "Though a man may be a buzzum friend of the Prince of Darkness, and in high favor with his sable majesty's court, that man will die a good Catholic if he ever placed his palm in the consecrated hand of an O'Donnell."

Father O'Donnell almost laughed out-

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right at the clever if doubtful means that the good woman employed to help along the cause of her husband's conversion. He was quick to see that Con was one of those odd characters that have in their make-up a genuine belief in the lore that is so freely dispensed and imbibed around the Irish turf fire. Besides, Con had a latent reverence for the invisible power that his early training taught him was associated with all things consecrated to God.

Con's evident agitation was the best proof that the "prophecy" had affected him to a considerable extent. Father O'Donnell was the first to break the silence.

"Well, Con, you are caught at last if the House of O'Donnell can depend on its prophecy."

"It never failed yet," put in Mrs. Cahill with the tone that always convinced Con that she spoke the truth.

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At length Con spoke.

“Will it come throe, yer riverence?”
he asked.

“You will see for yourself,” said Father O’Donnell. “When are you coming to Mass?”

There was silence again for some moments, then Con arose and coming towards the priest he said:

“Answer me wan question before I answer yours. If you wor the parish priest, and you wor goin’ to build a church, and two men bid aqual for the same job, wan from Kerry, and the other from yer own County Cork — if they wor aqually good builders which wan wid ye take?”

Father O’Donnell did not hesitate an instant, “A Kerryman would take the Kerry builder, a Corkman would take the man from Cork — and I’m from Corrigrhu.”

“Good-bye, yer reverence, I’ll be at Mass next Sunday, plase God.”

The "Call" of Caubeen Cassidy

MRS. ROYLSTON CHIDWICK was plainly disturbed. In her hands she held a letter, the cause of her perturbation, inviting her to a fashionable gathering composed of the élite of Oldkirk.

That such an ordinary matter as a formal invitation should cause the dear old lady so much anxiety requires explanation. She was the widow of Admiral Roylston Chidwick, whose death left her sole mistress of the large house which had been the home of the Chidwicks for generations. Excepting a small annuity from the Government, the lady had no income; and in order to "keep up appearances,"

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she was obliged to economize in ways that would have made her fashionable neighbors gasp did they but know. The late Admiral had been improvident, and left nothing beyond a legacy of debts — two facts that Mrs. Chidwick determined would never furnish gossip for her set as long as she could prevent it.

To this end, she had reduced "her help" to one old servant named Priscilla, who became a sort of companion as well as maid of all work to her impoverished mistress. The stables, too, were emptied of their blooded animals. One old horse, Neddy, alone remained. He had grown old in the service of the family, and had become so dear to Mrs. Chidwick that to part with him was out of the question.

The third dependent of the household was designated "Patrick" by Mrs. Chidwick, "The Papist Boy" by Priscilla, and

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"Caubeen Cassidy" by his peers. Caubeen's duty was to feed Neddy and to keep him groomed and "exercised." But his sphere of usefulness was gradually widened by Caubeen himself. He made himself agreeable and serviceable in so many ways that he was generally called into the domestic council whenever any matter which called for masculine judgment was up for discussion.

In regard to the matter of the invitation, Mrs. Chidwick's main difficulty was that she could not send a polite refusal, as she had often done before, without wounding the feelings of many old friends. And how could she go there in a style befitting the social standing of Admiral Roylston Chidwick's widow? That was the vital question!

She had no private carriage, no coachman. And it would *never* do to hire a

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carriage, or to go by the plebeian electric car.

When the "Papist boy" came to the kitchen to replenish the wood-box, Priscilla told him of her mistress' perplexity. Caubeen listened with interest to the story. Before it had ended, he had found a solution of the problem, but it required deep thinking to bring it to such working issue that he could propose it to his benefactress.

That night Mrs. Cassidy, Caubeen's mother, was surprised by having her son ask permission to go "on business" to the livery stable — realms prohibited by the careful mother of sixteen-year-old Patrick. The permission would never have been accorded had she known that the "business" necessitated a long consultation with "Red Reynolds." "Red Reynolds" was the town's "bad man," and he made no

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scruple about taking one of Caubeen's few precious coins for a mysterious looking fluid in a small black bottle.

Next day Mrs. Chidwick was surprised by an early morning visit from Patrick. The boy's eager manner imported something out of the ordinary.

"Excuse me for makin' so bould, ma'am," he began, "but it would be a great honor if you'd let me drive you to the time — I mane the party."

Mrs. Chidwick looked mystified. Caubeen explained that the solitary vehicle in the carriage house was in "good shape, barrin' a few scratches that he could varnish over." He assured her that Neddy was quite capable of making the journey under "certain conditions" to which he himself would attend. As a clinching argument, he declared himself ready to don the "ould coachman's livery wid the

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big silver buttons, and the beaver hat." Although many sizes too large for him, this outfit, in his opinion, would give such a refined appearance to the equipage as to vindicate before all the world the gentility and affluence of the Admiral's widow.

Mrs. Chidwick was dubious. However, she had confidence in Patrick's ability and the situation was urgent. At length she consented.

Caubeen at once set about his preparations for the great event. It seemed to him that his kind mistress had entrusted the honor of the house of Chidwick to his keeping. He swelled with pride and resolved to do his best. The carriage was overhauled and every pin and bolt examined. Breaks in the upholstery were skillfully darned by Priscilla. A nail here, a daub of glistening paint there, strengthened the unity and embellished the

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effect of the whole. Neddy was scraped and combed so repeatedly that his patience became exhausted. He communicated this fact to his groom by kicking him over the partition.

The great day at length arrived. After Mass, Caubeen lit a candle in honor of his friend St. Anthony, to whom he always recommended his important undertakings. Doubtless the good saint smiled at the naïve wording of his client's petition. He was requested to "keep ould Neddy on his feet, likewise have an eye on the wake spots in the runnin' gear, and above all, grant that the wire round the axle 'ill hould, for if it don't," with solemn earnestness, "meself and her 'ill be kilt."

It was a confident coachman who drove Neddy around to the front porch to await the advent of his mistress. He was carefully enveloped in the dark green "New-

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market," with the highly polished buttons, and crowned by the shining "tile." True, the coat gave indications that its original owner was absent. The hat had been reinforced under the sweat-band by a colored section of the Boston "Sunday Globe," pleated and inserted by the ingenious Priscilla.

It was good to see the mobile face of Caubeen frozen into the passivity demanded by the occasion. No professional coachman ever duplicated the studied salute which he made to his mistress, by touching, with a graceful curve, the long handled whip to the rim of his formidable headpiece.

Caubeen was well known to the younger generation of Oldkirk. Hence, many were the salutations he received from those who were not overawed by his ephemeral dignity.

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"Hi, Caubeen, where did you get the dip?" yelled one.

"Lord, look at Caubeen!" piously exclaimed another.

"Gee! Get on to the mitts, fellows," laughed a third.

To all these greetings Caubeen gave no heed beyond a frigid look with which he identified his tormentors for future punishment.

After a two hours' drive, they reached their destination. When Caubeen saw the magnificent house and all the elegantly dressed ladies and gentlemen grouped around the entrance, he felt repaid for all the labor he had expended on his own and Neddy's toilet. A beautiful lady came down the steps to greet Mrs. Chidwick. When her eye fell on Caubeen in his professional pose, her self-control seemed to have received a shock.

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"I shall remain only a few minutes, Patrick," said Mrs. Chidwick. "Merely give Neddy a drink. There is no time to unharness him."

Caubeen again saluted with his whip handle, all unconscious that the lady with his mistress almost swallowed her tiny lace handkerchief in her polite efforts to preserve gravity.

True to her promise, Mrs. Chidwick sent for the carriage within the specified time. When Caubeen received the order, he produced the bottle he had obtained from Red Reynolds and emptied its contents down Neddy's throat.

As a result, the old horse was galvanized into a prancing young colt. Caubeen was ready for his *coup d'état*. As he had anticipated, the entire brilliant company were on the lawn waiting to see Mrs. Chidwick's departure. Neddy's knee action was never

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better, nor had his ancient tail ever been held more proudly aloft in the days of his giddy colthood. Mrs. Chidwick, while wondering at the juvenile antics of Neddy, was secretly pleased. Caubeen caught her approving look as he was about to rein in the restive Neddy, and in the exuberance of his well doing, essayed to flick the whip lash close to Neddy's ear. But in gracefully drawing back his whip to accomplish this feat, he did not allow for the altitude of his hat. The result was that it was knocked from its not too firm resting place. To add to the embarrassment of the situation, the colored supplement under the sweat-band spread its lurid colors on the close-cropped lawn. But the climax was reached when a gentleman in evening clothes picked up the hat and handed it to the humiliated coachman.

Caubeen instinctively thanked him and,

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in his confusion, placed it on his head. Instantly his rosy face, eyes, ears, chin and all were shut out from view — for the long black funnel descended to his shoulders. Poor Mrs. Chidwick was bitterly mortified, yet she could not help joining in the merriment at his, if not at her own expense.

Her discomfiture, however, was nothing compared to that of Caubeen. He had done his best to bring credit to his mistress, and he had exposed her to ridicule! The drive home was a sad one. Caubeen's spine had lost its rigidity, and there were something like tears in the blue eyes that had looked so hopeful that morning.

When Neddy was safely housed and fed, Caubeen went to "have it out" with St. Anthony. The church was dark, save for the light of the sanctuary lamp, but this was sufficient to guide him to the

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statue of the saint. One of the Fathers attached to the church was praying in the obscurity of the high altar, when he was a little startled to hear a boyish voice, with a sob running through it, exclaim:

"Oh, thin, sure it was a joke maybe to disgrace the good lady and me. I did not think you'd trate an ould friend that way — an' after me burnin' so many candles for you too! 'Deed then you can stay in the dark after this, for the sorra crumb of a candle will I ever burn for you agin."

Father Dominic's interest was aroused. He followed the boy to the lighted vestibule.

"Well, my boy, it seems that you and St. Anthony are on the outs."

"Indeed 'tis true, Father," earnestly answered Caubeen, while the good priest repressed a smile. "Bein' so young, I suppose he likes to play tricks, and be the

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same token, 'twas a mane wan he played on me."

Father Dominic was making a mental note of the bright, young face and honest eyes just now kindling with the warmth of their possessor's feelings. He had no difficulty in getting all the facts from Caubeen, or in mollifying him by recalling that Neddy had stayed on his feet, and that the "wake spots" were strengthened. "I am sure," he added with a smile, "if you had specified about the hat the saint would have kept his eye on that also."

Thus was a life-long friendship begun between the zealous young missionary and the warm-hearted Irish lad. It was the beginning, also, of the career of the noted Franciscan preacher, called by many of his admirers "St. Anthony II," but better known to you and to me under the euphonious name of "Caubeen Cassidy."

Margy's Knight

MARGY DELANCEY had passed a busy morning arranging the guest's room at Chestnut Lodge. Her father had asked her to leave their beach cottage, and return home to prepare the house for the reception of the Rev. Clitus A. Preston, an American cousin, whom she had never seen.

Father Preston had telegraphed from London that he would be at Chestnut Lodge the following Thursday. So Margy had "run down" from the fashionable summer resort to put things in order. Thursday morning found everything "ship-shape Bristol fashion," as she expressed it to Simon, the butler, eliciting from that pious old man a significant "Thank God,"

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which sent the energetic Margy into a fit of merriment.

Free from her domestic cares, Margy took her sun-bonnet and went for her favorite walk along the bank of the Boro which flowed through her father's domain. Whistling like the "tom-boy" her father affectionately called her, she made a pretty picture of youthful innocence as she strolled along the river path. Barely sixteen, she gave early promise to sustain the local tradition that "the Delancey beauty never skipped a daughter of the name." Hers was the dark Irish type of beauty that has furnished inspiration alike to poet and painter for generations.

While in her infancy, her mother died, leaving her early training to a devoted housekeeper and whatever time her father could spare from the cares of a large estate. Her later education had been entrusted

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to a French gentlewoman in poor circumstances, who conscientiously taught her all the accomplishments to be expected in a young lady of good family. Thanks to this careful governess she was deeply religious. So great was her reverence for everything holy that old Simon had predicted more than once that "the veil is spinnin' for her."

It was a great source of joy for her when she heard that "Cousin Clitus" had been raised to the priesthood. She had sent her first letter to him in Rome, supplementing her father's invitation to visit them on his return. She was disappointed in the short note which she received in reply, since it gave her no clue to his personality, and made no reference to the photo which she had requested.

As she walked along now, she wondered for the tenth time what he would be like.

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"I suppose he has long hair, thick glasses, a thin ascetic face, and a scholarly stoop," she mused aloud; "he must be awfully clever to have written so many books — Oh dear! I hope he won't hear of my tree-climbing, stone-throwing, and other wild pranks — he would be immeasurably shocked if —"

Her soliloquy was quickly suppressed, as coming suddenly around a clump of laurel, she almost ran into a young man who was diligently fishing. Her first impulse was to turn and flee, but as the object of her alarm was young, tall, and pleasant featured, her timidity gave way to her curiosity and spirit of adventure. He wore a sweater buttoned to his chin, a Scotch cap and hip boots. From his attire Margy concluded that he was an English tourist — a gentleman evidently, but a rather impudent one to be fishing

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directly opposite to a large sign which bore the inscription: "NO FISHING." The sign had been placed there by Margy's direction, for the double purpose of sparing the trout that she loved to watch, and excluding strangers from her favorite retreat. This evident disregard of her wishes roused her displeasure, so that when the young man courteously raised his cap and bade her, "Good morning," she stiffened perceptibly.

"Pardon me, but are you aware that you are fishing on a preserve?" she said with an unconscious gesture toward the sign.

"It is the fault of that sign," he answered in an injured tone. "I doubted the statement that there is no fishing here, and my doubts were well founded, for I caught three 'beauties,' thus proving to my satisfaction that the sign is misleading."

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"The fact remains that you are fishing in prohibited waters," she rejoined in a freezing tone.

"May I ask to whom those prohibited waters belong?" he inquired with the air of one looking for information.

"To The Honorable Harvey Delancey, Resident Magistrate," she answered with added dignity.

"The river flows through Mr. Dalton's estate, just above us, does it not?" he again questioned.

"Yes."

"And Mr. Dalton's waters are not prohibited, I understand?"

"No, but what has that got to do with the matter of your poaching here?" she retorted with rising indignation.

"Only this," he answered, as he seated himself on the bank, and began calmly to reel in his line, "I am going to wait

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until Mr. Dalton's waters come down, and then I am going to fish again."

Margy was plainly disconcerted. Ever since reaching her teens her least wish had been respected. Moreover, she had grown accustomed to the homage that was usually offered to her position, if not to her undeniable beauty. But here was a young man who not only opposed her command, but who regarded her with no more interest than he would have bestowed on one of her father's gamekeepers. To add to her mortification, she was keenly conscious that he was laughing at her. The knowledge did not lessen her resentment, which showed itself in her next words:

"You will have an opportunity to display your legal wit at the next Court Sessions — what is your name?" she demanded haughtily.

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"My legal wit assures me that no one is bound to answer a question that would incriminate oneself, and if you knew my name my case would be ruined. Now the proper thing for you to do," he added gravely, "is to arrest me as a suspicious character, and bring me to the village lockup."

This piece of advice, so seriously given, conjured up a mental picture to Margy's mind which was too much for her sense of humor. The incongruity of the whole situation sent her into an uncontrollable fit of laughter, in which the stranger heartily joined.

"Now that the atmosphere is cleared," he said when the laughter subsided, "I must apologize for intruding where no intrusion was meant."

"The apology must come from me," quickly rejoined Margy, "for my ridiculous behavior."

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"I assure you that I did not regard it as ridiculous," he answered, "since it showed me a glimpse of the character I expected to find in the heiress of Chestnut Lodge."

"You knew me then?" she asked with heightened color.

"Few are permitted to come to these parts and leave them without having heard of the 'Rose of Corrigrhu.'"

"Which betrays the fact that you are staying at the village inn, where that high-sounding title originated," she rejoined.

"Your penetration is not at fault — perhaps I have betrayed still more important facts regarding myself!" he exclaimed apprehensively.

"Nothing very discreditable," she smiled.

"For instance?"

"You are an American."

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"I am curious to know how you found that out — by my speech?"

"No," she laughed, "following the method of a famous detective, I went by a process of elimination. You are too witty for an English tourist, too self-possessed for a native. There remains only the third type of our summer visitors."

"At the risk of hearing something to my confusion, I must ask you, did you discover anything else?" his question was accompanied by a curious amused look which she could not interpret.

"Yes," she answered slowly.

"What?"

"That you are a — well, a most unusual — inexplicable tourist," she concluded lamely.

"Then I beg of you not to ask me to explain myself," he laughed, "for the

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only interesting thing about me is this atmosphere of mystery."

"If the explanation would be commonplace, I prefer the puzzle," rejoined Margy, whose Celtic imagination was prone to weave romances about the unknown.

"Your perplexity is similar to that of Scott's Lady of the Lake, when she discovered the royal hunter," he replied, falling in with her humor.

"There is a resemblance," she smiled, "and for want of a better name I will create you, Knight of Snowdown, James Fitz-James."

"That, too, is not malapropos, with apologies to his kingship."

"Then you have a title?" she asked with a quick recurrence to what she desired most to know.

"I have a title," he answered simply.

His tall soldierly figure prompted the next question.

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“And you wear a uniform?”

“When I am not poaching — yes,” with an amused look, “and now for fear of becoming commonplace, I must refuse to take any more chances with my ‘knight-hood,’ which would not survive further revelations.”

“I have a presentiment that the revelations will come, and that the ‘knight-hood’ will remain,” Margy replied with an assured air.

“Thanks for your implied faith, which I trust will not be disturbed by any — any subsequent developments.”

“Then there will be ‘developments’!” exclaimed Margy triumphantly.

“Unless my business with your father can be transacted under my new title, I will be forced to reveal myself — but I understand he is not home,” he looked at her inquiringly.

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"This evening he will be down from Dublin to meet my cousin, Father Preston — by the way, did you ever meet him in America; he is a novelist of some note?"

"I have seen Father Preston's works, but I have never met their author," he assured her. Then extending his hand he said, "Permit me to thank you for this very pleasant half hour. The next time we meet you will have no difficulty in solving your 'inexplicable poacher.'"

"Au revoir, Sir Knight," she answered gaily, "my curiosity is intense. Father Preston will doubtless be glad to meet a fellow American, and don't forget we dine at six. All this is unconventional, but," with a sweeping curtsy, "on her native heath, the 'Rose of Corrigrhu' makes her convention suit her convenience." With a merry laugh she was gone.

As Margy hurried homeward, her

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thoughts again reverted to her clerical cousin. Above all things she wanted to appear well in his eyes, for she intended to enlist his sympathy and cooperation in a project very dear to her heart.

She had recently met in Dublin the Mother General of the religious Order that appealed to her the most. The Mother House was in America, and thither Margy would have to go if she entered the Order. The memory of that interview was constantly with her, although the only encouragement she had received was "to wait in patience." So she decided to confide in Father Preston, to the end that she could count on him in persuading her father to give his consent.

Hence, she wished to appear to him as she really was, a serious-minded, pious young woman, with an ardent desire to devote her life to a foreign mission in

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God's service. True, she had found the characterization of a young novice in one of her cousin's books hardly descriptive of herself: "shy, almost to bashfulness, she was regarded by strangers. But the good nuns soon discovered that her modest reserve was the natural, or rather the supernatural veil of a delicate soul set apart for the Master's service." Margy had made a heroic effort to practise the "supernatural reserve" of Father Preston's ideal novice, but the experiment upset the whole household. The housekeeper, remembering her own youth, diagnosed the symptoms to Simon as "a bit o' heart trouble," but the obtuse butler was convinced of "gallupin' consumption." All were relieved when the alarming malady disappeared as suddenly as it came.

"What would he think," mused Margy as she walked along, "if he ever found out

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that I am such a hoyden" — then came a thought that almost stopped her breath. What if her recent escapade should reach his ears! What if his first introduction to his Irish cousin would be the story of a half hour spent with an absolute stranger, whom she had implicitly invited to dinner without even knowing his name!

Her first impulse was to return and bind the "Knight" to secrecy. But such a course seemed repellent to her frank nature, so she abandoned it. It was scarcely probable, she reasoned, that on his first meeting with her cousin, the "Knight" would tell him of her unconventional behavior. Then, too, he was a gentleman, and as such he could be trusted to avoid any reference that might cause her embarrassment.

Somewhat reassured, Margy hastened to her room to prepare for dinner. She had

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scarcely finished dressing when she received a summons to see her father in the library. This she knew from experience meant that one or both of the guests had arrived.

On entering the library Margy was conscious of a tall figure leaning against the mantel. She did not look directly at him, but fixed her eyes on her father who seemed to be laboring under some unusual emotion.

“Margy,” he began, “allow me to introduce you to my nephew, Rev. Clitus A. Preston, otherwise known as The Knight of Snowdown, James Fitz-James.”

Like one in a dream Margy extended her hand and tried to murmur some words of welcome. From far away, it seemed she heard her father explaining, “His telegram said Tuesday, but I misread Thursday. He has passed the intervening

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time in fishing — and by all accounts he 'caught a Tartar.'” During the explanation Margy recovered herself sufficiently to look up at Father Preston and say:

“O Father, can I ever hope for pardon!”

“I always absolve the truly penitent,” he smiled as he laid his hand on her head, “but I cannot forgive where fault there is none, even at the request of The Lady of the Lake.”

The Temptation of “Billy” Blue

DOWN the front steps of the Catholic Orphanage at Brierly, a boy of fourteen raced, heedless of the horrified exclamation of Sister Anne, who watched his precipitous fight from the porch. When he reached the ground he turned toward the Sister with a penitent look.

“I am sorry, Sister Anne, that I forgot your orders about going down there easy; but I will come back and go down awfully slow if you forgive me this time.”

“Just like the boy,” inwardly commented the Sister, as she shook her head. “There is no need of that now, but the next time remember not to risk your neck in such a fashion.”

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"All right, Sister," he smiled back at her, as, with inborn courtesy, he raised his cap and hurried away.

Sister Anne looked after the manly little figure, and wondered, as she had often done before, who were the boy's parents. One night when she was portress, she had found him in an oblong basket within the shelter of the vestibule. Except a small medal of Our Lady, fastened around his neck, and the fine texture of his baby clothes, there was nothing to give any clue to his parentage. Since that night, Sister Anne had taken a motherly interest in the boy, who in turn fairly worshipped the kind-hearted nun.

Thoughts of his origin were far from Billy's mind as he trudged along his newspaper route, intent on making all the sales he could, the sooner to realize the sum that was to bring him the one desire

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of his heart. Billy was a growing capitalist, and, like all men of finance, he had his difficult problems to solve. The one confronting him now had been in his mind for some time, and even his optimistic review of his resources was discouraging in face of the problem interrogatively stated: "How can a fellow buy a twenty-five dollar bicycle on thirty cents a day?"

He had asked himself the question several times. He had put it respectively to the statues of Saint Joseph, Saint Dominic, and Saint Anthony, in the Orphanage Chapel, but they had not as yet answered it.

Only last week he had permitted himself to visit the store window where "Silver Wings" was imprisoned. His desire to be the lucky purchaser became so strong as he gazed on the object of his devotion, that he feared he had committed the

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"capital" sin whose name he could never pronounce. As he had always done in similar emergencies of conscience, he sought out Father White, the young chaplain at the Orphanage, and confided to him the whole disturbing proposition. While the priest counseled him to moderate his desire, still he did not think it wrong to want a bicycle "awful bad." What was even more encouraging, Father White was hopeful that "sometime, somehow," Billy Blue would be granted his wish.

"You know, Billy," he said, "sometimes God sends good boys things that they could never have if they were not good boys. So keep up your courage; maybe in some miraculous fashion (he was thinking of his own slender savings depleted by many similar "miracles") God will assist you to become the owner of 'Silver Wings.'"

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Billy had left the priest's office with his faith strengthened and his hopes renewed. He returned to his friends in the chapel, and as he knelt before their familiar statues, he wondered which of them would be commissioned to perform the miracle. He rather hoped that the honor would be given to Saint Anthony, for, besides being a particular friend, he was very young and would understand all about a "wheel."

But the days had passed and as yet the miracle was among the possibilities of the future. Ruefully he turned over the coins in his pocket, his entire capital. He knew without looking that the collection of nickels and dimes represented a week's savings, one dollar and ten cents.

"A dollar-ten a week, nearly twenty-five weeks," he groaned inwardly. "Silver Wings" would surely be gone before then,

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and the picture of "spins" into the country on "free days" would never be realized. He was opposite to the store window now where his coveted prize was exhibited in all the glistening glory of blue enamel and nickel trimmings. The temptation to again risk the "capital" sin, and look upon this thing of beauty mastered him. For ten minutes his longing eyes roved over every graceful bar and shining spoke. With something like rebellion in his heart, he at length tore himself away. Running along the sidewalk, he savagely kicked a small heap of rubbish that lay in his path, scattering it in all directions. At the same time he noticed that he had uncovered a square black object, which a hasty glance assured him was a pocket-book. Without further investigation he thrust it into his pocket and hurried to the Orphanage. In the secrecy of his

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little room he examined his treasure. At first he could not believe the evidence of his senses, but after feeling and counting the crisp bills several times, he realized that he had just fifty dollars in his possession.

This was surely an answer to his prayers — the miracle for which he had waited! Then suddenly came a bolt from the blue — the money was not his! With this thought arose the first great temptation of his young life. "Why not keep it?" a voice seemed to whisper; "no one saw you pick it up. Some rich man must have lost it, and no doubt he will never miss it." The battle was on; the training of the Sisters and the sermons of Father White, opposed to the ownership of "Silver Wings," and the possession of twenty-five dollars.

Long after the other inmates of the

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Orphanage were asleep, the orphan boy knelt in the darkness by the side of his little bed. Again and again, he fought back every thought of keeping the money. Still the temptation returned under cover of some new suggestion. "At least take twenty-five dollars, and put the rest back where you found it," whispered his tormentor. But, through the darkness there came another voice, one that he knew and loved, the soft tones of Sister Anne: "Seventh, thou shalt not steal." What mysterious influence, at the same moment, made him recall the story that Father White had told them on the eve of their First Communion — perhaps his Guardian Angel could tell.

He was a drummer boy, Father White had said, who, on being taken prisoner by the enemy, was brought before their Colonel, and commanded by him to

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trample on his country's flag or suffer death. The drummer boy drew himself up to his full height, and saluting the Colonel, he answered: "Sir, you have the power to take my life, but you cannot take away my honor."

"Now, boys," Father White had concluded, "you are all drummer boys in our Dear Lord's army, and sooner or later the enemy will tempt you to betray Him, to whom you will promise a lifelong allegiance to-morrow. When that dark hour of trial comes, remember that solemn promise, and also remember the brave drummer boy who chose death before dishonor."

When the sun arose that morning its first rays stole into a tiny bedroom of the Orphanage, and crowned the curly head of the sleeping orphan boy with the golden halo of his first great victory.

Father White had an early visitor.

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Patiently he listened to the halting story, punctuated by the vainly suppressed sobs of the youthful narrator. At its close, the priest drew the lad toward him and smiling into the tear-stained face, he said:

"I am very proud of my little drummer boy, who met the 'Colonel' last night and gave him his answer."

Together they examined the pocket-book, and Father White found what Billy had overlooked, a visiting card bearing the name of the owner, and the name of the local hotel at which he was staying. Father White telephoned to the address, and soon after the owner of the pocket-book arrived. He introduced himself as Henry Osborne, a western mine proprietor. He listened with interest to Father White's story of the pocket-book. When he saw Billy, he became deeply interested in him. He asked the boy many strange questions,

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the drift of which puzzled Father White, who, in addition, was not overpleased when the millionaire dismissed the poor lad without even a word of thanks.

When Billy had left the room, Mr. Osborne turned abruptly to Father White and demanded.

"How did a boy like that come to be in such a place as an Orphans' Home?"

Father White resented the tone of the question, but he, nevertheless, gave an account of Billy's first arrival at the Orphanage. During the recital, Mr. Osborne sank into a chair, and covered his face with his hands, as if oblivious of the priest's presence. In a few moments, however, he recovered himself and said:

"Pardon me, sir, for my seeming rudeness, but that boy's face awakened painful memories. My daughter married a young man of your religion, and thereby

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incurred my anger. They went abroad, where their two children, a boy and a girl, were born. A faithful nurse, who had been in our family for years, left my house to enter the employ of her young mistress. She watched over the children jealously, especially the boy, to whom she was devotedly attached. Unknown to any one, the poor woman's mind was giving way, and the malady took the form of a hallucination that I was seeking to injure the boy. One night she left the house and took the child with her. The next day her body was found in the North River, but the boy's fate was never learned. When I met your orphan boy, I fancied that I saw a family resemblance of my son-in-law — but, in the face of facts, the possibility is too remote."

"Was there anything on the baby's person at the time of his disappearance,

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which would help to identify him at this late period?"

"I never heard of anything — but wait — I will telephone to my granddaughter at the hotel, to come here; perhaps she might have learned something from her mother."

When the young lady entered the room, Father White was disappointed when he saw that she bore not the slightest resemblance to Billy.

"Jessica, dear," the old man began gently, "did you ever hear your mother speak of a little brother that you had when you were a baby?"

"Oh, yes, grandpa," she exclaimed, "he was christened Leopold, but mama changed it to Leo, in honor of the Pope, who blessed him and placed around his neck a chain and locket similar to mine."

Father White manifested a lively in-

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terest. "Have you got the locket with you?" he asked.

For answer she unfastened a gold chain, which she was wearing, and passed it to the priest. It was a simple affair all but the locket, which bore on its upper side a beautiful vignette of the Blessed Virgin.

Without exciting their hopes, Father White told them that Billy Blue wore a gold chain and locket, but as he had never seen it he could not describe it.

"Send for the boy," exclaimed Mr. Osborne with visible agitation.

"Billy," said Father White, as the lad entered the room, "let me see that chain you are wearing around your neck."

All unconscious of the importance of the issue, Billy modestly turned his back toward the young lady, who was regarding him earnestly, and lifted the chain from its resting place.

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With ill-concealed excitement Mr. Osborne and his granddaughter bent over the priest as he unwound the cloth that Billy had securely wrapped around his treasure. It was a dramatic moment, as the last fold was removed — the old man straightened up with a gasp, and the girl gave a little cry of disappointment, for her eager eyes beheld — a highly polished brass medal of St. Anthony!

Father White replaced the wrapping of the medal in silence. After all, he concluded inwardly, it was absurd for him to have thought that Billy would prove to be the grandson of Mr. Osborne, and the possible heir to millions. With a rueful smile he called the boy to him. He was about to place the chain over Billy's bowed head, when he noticed a string which the boy wore in the fashion of a scapular.

"What other saint have you got on

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'a string'?" smiled Father White, as he playfully pulled "the saint" from its hiding place. All, except Billy, looked with astonishment on the object that rested in the priest's palm — an exact replica of the girl's locket. With an exclamation she sprang forward and pressed the back of the locket, which suddenly opened and disclosed to view two miniatures of herself and Billy Blue — the youthful pictures of her mother and father!

Hugging, crying and kissing followed in confused sequence. Smiles, too, were in evidence when the bewildered Billy recovered his breath sufficiently to tell how he had tried to propitiate his advocate of the "wheel" by transferring the Saint's medal from its original cord to the more pretentious chain of the Virgin's locket.

When the train left for the West that evening it carried an extremely happy

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boy, who was trying to realize that in one short day he had acquired a home, family, wealth and — the one reality in the baggage car that proved it was not a beautiful dream — the matchless "Silver Wings."

The Widow's Might

(Courtesy of Benziger Bros.)

THE Widow Reardon had not spent so much time over her toilet since she was the blushing *colleen* that "bowled over" the dashing Dublin barrister some thirty years ago. That was Dan Reardon's way of expressing what had happened to him when he first met her. "You simply bowled me over, Nellie," he assured her afterwards in such tragic tones that the girlish figure at his side was convulsed with merriment at the expense of the young giant towering above her.

Those were bright days, and for some years no misfortune came to mar the happiness of the young couple. But, like the wolf lurking around the camp-fire,

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death was hiding in the shadows of the domestic hearth. Dan Reardon was the victim.

Mrs. Reardon was a brave little woman. When grief threatened to overwhelm her, faith came to her rescue. Soon she was able to face calmly the problem of securing a livelihood for herself and her two children on a bank account of good wishes. Dan Reardon had lived well and died poor. Sympathy for his widow was not lacking, but little practical assistance was forthcoming from her friends. She bitterly realized that she was left to face the issue alone and unaided.

This was the beginning of a life of sacrifice, that is not chronicled in history save in the Book that contains the golden records of the saints and martyrs. None but the Crucified could understand the daily immolation of those long bitter years. None

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save the Father of Orphans could measure the depth of suffering that nightly welled up from that heroic mother's heart.

Some such thought now passed through Mrs. Reardon's mind as she brushed a few silent tears from the faded blue eyes that had once looked so hopefully on the world.

"Mother, we will be late if you don't hurry; I have been waiting ever so long."

The voice was followed by the entrance of a young girl whose likeness to Mrs. Reardon unmistakably proclaimed the relationship.

"Mother, dear, I believe you are getting giddy," she laughed, as she came up behind her mother and observed the unusual care with which the gray hair had been combed under the new bonnet.

"Of course I am giddy this morning, Moira darling," she answered with a little catch in her voice that made the young

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girl impulsively throw her arms around the frail figure.

“But why are you crying, little mother, when we are all so happy?”

“You are crying yourself,” answered her mother. Then they both laughed.

At length they were on their way to the cathedral to witness the ordination of the young ecclesiastics from the Seminary of St. Sulpice. Soon after they had taken their seats the great organ pealed forth the *Veni Creator*. The hymn was caught up by the procession of the seminarians' slowly marching up the aisle toward the altar. Even the most indifferent spectator was moved on beholding that large body of white-robed youths about to consecrate their young manhood to a life of sublime sacrifice.

Two by two they came, bearing in one hand a lighted taper while the other held

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the book from which they sang. The scarlet robes of the priesthood with which they were soon to be invested were borne on the arm of each. The combination of light and color presented an aspect at once beautiful and devotional, typifying as it did the red of sacrifice, the white of innocence, and the light of Faith which made both possible.

On all this the Widow Reardon looked as if on a vision from heaven. Not until Moira pressed her arm did she realize that part of this glory belonged to her. But could it be true? Yes, there he was, the same innocent face that had smiled up at her from his mother's knee, the same golden curls that her mother fingers loved to twine. There, too, was a living replica of her dead lover, but with such a light on his countenance as had never graced the comely features of Dan Reardon.

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The mist before her eyes shut him off from her sight. But she heard the solemn tones that challenged each candidate for the Sacred Office, heard the firm answer and the step forward that preluded a life of sacrifice. With a mother's instinct she whispered a prayer for each, then her heart almost stopped beating.

"Danielis Reardon, diaconus . . . ?"

"Adsum!"

She did not know the translation of the answer, but she spelled into it a meaning of her own. It mattered little if the language was unknown to her when the voice that spoke it was that of the blue-eyed babe who had first whispered to her the magic name of mother.

As the impressive ceremony drew to a close Moira suddenly noticed that her mother's face had grown deathly white. In answer to her anxious query her mother

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whispered with a reassuring smile, "It is nothing." Little did the devoted girl dream that she had interrupted a renewal of her mother's oft-repeated prayer "to live to see my boy a priest." It was repeated now at the instance of a violent pain that had been threatening to steal her senses during the past half hour. But now as she had witnessed the end of the ordination she could keep up no longer. With the smile still on her face, her last conscious look was exchanged with her son as he passed down the aisle in his scarlet robes "a priest forever." Tenderly they bore her to the sacristy. Gently they made way for the white-faced young priest who was to begin his ministry on his ordination morning by anointing his dying mother.

"*Per istam sanctam unctionem . . .*,"
each word from his grief-stricken heart

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came as if freighted with the love of a lifetime. To the kneeling *ordinati* they seemed to take on even an imperious meaning as with bowed heads and tear-dimmed eyes they felt the power of a priest's plea at the gates of eternity for his mother's soul.

At the hospital the doctors gravely shook their heads, and one of them, taking the young priest aside, said:

"This is very sad, my dear young friend, very sad."

"Will she recover?" curtly interrupted Father Reardon.

"While there is life there is hope, you know and — er — miracles still happen."

"Which means briefly that nothing but a miracle will save her life?"

The doctor bowed as he answered, "Nothing."

"God's will be done," said the priest.

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Moira entreated her brother to postpone his "First Mass" until Mrs. Reardon became better, or at least until she regained consciousness. She had not been told that her mother would never be conscious again, hence she wondered when her brother insisted that he would say his First Mass the following morning.

Like to the First Priest's vigil was Father Reardon's preparation for his First Mass. With few intermissions he knelt all night long in his room, feeling as much as human being can feel the agony in the garden. All these years he had looked forward to this coming day. Not till this moment did he realize how completely he had disassociated himself from the "crowning glory." It was always his mother — how she would look — how she would feel — how happy it would make her. It was to have been a glorious re-

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turn for all her years of saving and sacrifice. "To see you on the altar," was all she had asked, and now at the last moment this one consolation of her sad life was to be denied her.

"Oh God — Master, not this," he rebelled in the first moments of his agony. Then he prayed as never before, until at length the grace of his ordination again possessed his soul with the "peace that surpasseth understanding."

The early dawn found him still kneeling. But his tear-stained face was no longer hidden in the newly consecrated palms; instead it was raised toward a crucifix as the face of his Master had been raised toward a similar vision. The agony was over, the "Fiat" had been pronounced, and Father Reardon went to vest for his First Mass.

Slowly and reverently he performed the

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sacred rites. Only once did the assistant priest remind him that he was delaying longer than the rubrics prescribed. It was at the moment when the Word became Flesh in his cradled fingers. Small wonder that he unduly paused, for to him it seemed that heaven and earth themselves stood still. Having completed the solemn sacrifice he descended from the altar prepared to meet the trial in store for him.

Scarcely had he unvested when the sexton whispered to him, "They want you at the hospital, Father."

"Did they say why?" he asked with supernatural calmness.

The sexton hesitated. "Speak out. What was the exact message?" questioned Father Reardon.

"The 'phone was not working well, so I did not catch the details."

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“For God’s sake, man, what did you catch — tell me?”

“Father Reardon at once — passed away suddenly — seven-twenty. That is all I could understand and ——”

Father Reardon was gone. On the way to the hospital he said the *post missam* prayers, resolutely keeping from his mind two distracting thoughts — his mother was dead — she died at seven-twenty, the moment of the consecration!

He entered his mother’s room so quietly that he did not attract the attention of its occupants. At the bedside was Moira, gently straightening the pillows that helped to support the half reclining form of his mother. On the other side of the bed stood the doctor. Then he looked at the pale face on the pillow. Doubting his senses he drew near, but not until the blue eyes opened and the voice he loved

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called, "Dan, my boy, my boy," could he admit to his bewildered brain that his mother lived. Falling on his knees, he kissed her radiant face, then raising his hands, his first "*Benedictio Dei*" was pronounced over the silvery head that had planned and prayed for this hour.

Arising, he was confronted by the doctor. "Well, Father Reardon," he said, extending his hand, "the miracle that we spoke about has been wrought."

"Your patient is better," answered the priest with a happy smile.

"Better," reiterated the doctor — "she is well, perfectly cured. The *coma* passed away suddenly at seven-twenty — so I telephoned you immediately. It is most astonishing."

"Do you know of any medical reason or scientific precedent to explain it?" asked the priest.

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“No, nor does any one else. It is an out-and-out contradiction of all natural results in similar circumstances.”

The young priest knelt in silent thanksgiving. He had made the sacrifice of the dearest thing he held on earth. Like Abraham, he had offered his best beloved to his Master, and his obedience had won the restoration of his oblation from a generous Lord.

Anima Renata

DOWN by the dark canal the wind was raging fiercely. The driving rain and flashing lightning added to the grandeur of the storm. No human being would venture out on such a night, unless driven by dire necessity, least of all would one have braved the storm-swept tow-path that bordered the canal. What then could be the reason for the presence of that silent figure standing within the circle of light cast by the electric lamp placed almost at the edge of the dark water? The wind had blown her hair free, the rain dripped from her clothing, and yet she seemed unconscious of her miserable plight. As she raised her face upward for an instant one could have read her awful pur-

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pose in her eyes. It was not a wicked face nor was there in it a trace of coarseness. Save for the signs of recent dissipation and the wild eyes it might have been the face of a child.

Leaning against the lamp post for support, she pressed her burning forehead against the cold iron. "Cold, oh, so cold!" she muttered. "Hard and cold as the world." Then she broke forth into hysterical laughter that was not good to hear. "So this is the end of it," she said aloud. "'The beautiful and accomplished daughter of our esteemed mayor' the papers called me when I graduated from the convent. Great God! am I the same person? The eighteen year old débutante of whom such brilliant things were predicted. It is five years since then — or is it five hundred? — but it doesn't matter, the wreck is complete, and

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drink has conquered. I must not wait or my courage will fail."

Gathering her dripping garments about her she made a step towards the river, then hesitated as if something were holding her back. Putting her hand to her neck she unfastened a gold chain to which was suspended a medal of the Blessed Virgin. "I will spare you this last insult at least," she said as if addressing the graven image. Then she continued with unnatural calmness. "The neck of a suicide is not the place for you. Good-bye, sweet Mother — Oh, if you could only forgive your wayward child!"

She was about to cast the medal from her when another impulse caused her to press a farewell kiss on its shining surface. At the same instant a blinding flash lit up the surrounding darkness. With a piercing cry, the unhappy girl fell to the earth.

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In a dim way she was conscious that she had been struck by lightning, but what was that great light, whence came that beautiful music? Wonderingly she gazed upward and then all the powers of her soul awoke as never before. Her startled eyes saw that the blinding brilliancy came from a figure seated beneath a flaming cross, surrounded by beings of a brightness so dazzling that again she felt the hot pain that had before seared her eyes. She dared not look again on that awful majesty, for she knew that she was dead and that this was her hour of judgment. Then the Figure spoke.

No thunder she had ever heard on earth equalled the volume of that voice. The sweetest music her trained ear had ever listened to was discord compared to the timbre of those tones.

“Let the Book be opened.”

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Then the trumpet tones of the Recording Angel recalled the history of early chapters of her life, those golden days of innocence and happiness, her little acts of self-denial, charity and obedience. Oh! how carefully every little deed was treasured! Then the First Communion and the convent life of purity and holiness. Borne up by the hope that those years of innocence might plead for her, she ventured to raise her head. What a beautiful vision met her gaze! Standing with hands outstretched was a form clad all in white, save for a blue cincture around the waist, with twelve gold stars for a crown. The veil thrown back revealed a face of such sweetness and purity as could belong only to the Immaculate Conception! There was no mistaking that sweet look. In the convent chapel she had seen its counterpart feebly portrayed on the statue at

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whose feet she had loved to pray. Even as she looked she heard the Angel's tone change and the soft music cease. Fearfully she withdrew her gaze from the Virgin's face and to her dismay she saw that the golden leaves of the Book had changed to a leaden hue. The angels who had sung so sweetly were silent, and with their wings they covered their bright countenances as if in shame.

Then the Virgin veiled her face and the sad recital began. Her graduation year, the first temptation, the sparkling wine, the dare of her companions, the formation of the habit, her battles to overcome it and her miserable failures. No detail had escaped the omniscient Being. Every thought, word and deed were carefully written. Oh, that she could hide now from that awful Majesty she had offended! Even hell with its torments would be

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welcomed to escape the dread anger of that outraged God. But no, justice had to be administered and the pitiless tones went on. At length the sad litany was finished. The reading ceased, the mighty Book was closed and the dull echo of its leaden leaves was answered by something like a sob from the wing-veiled angels of the choirs.

Then before the Tribunal arose a creature so hideous that nothing on earth could be compared to him.

“This soul is mine, O Omnipotent God! Your Book of Life is my witness to her frequent falls, and her final sin of self-destruction has given me an added title by right of which I claim this soul for all eternity. Omnipotence, delay not the sentence that is to give hell another victim, for there is none to plead defense.”

The half mocking, half whining appeal

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was finished, and the Evil One looked around in triumph on the veiled faces of the celestial choirs. His evil countenance took on a more malignant sneer when his wicked eyes beheld the dejected attitude of the Angel Guardian, and the bowed head of the Patron Saint.

Suddenly, his bold assurance departed, he trembled in every part of his malodorous body, for his glance had encountered a sight that struck terror into every fiber of his dark being. The veil of the Virgin's Face was slowly raised and from the pure lips there came a sound as of silver bells; soft and low, the liquid accents penetrated the remotest part of spacious Heaven.

"Master of Lies," began the voice, "well may you tremble, for there is one to plead whose power is greater than thine. For a short time this poor soul served under

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your dark standard, but her last conscious act was to renounce your rule, and to return to her forsaken Queen. I heard her cry of suffering and now I lay the burden of its sorrow at the feet of Him who will not refuse His mercy."

As the voice ceased the thunderous tones with which the judgment began were heard again.

"Arise, sinner, and hear thy sentence."

Trembling between hope and fear the prostrate form arose. Then the Voice resumed.

"Satan, your title is defective. But, for God's glory and your still greater humiliation, this soul shall return to earth and be subject to your further temptations. Her corporal eyes shall no longer see that the eyes of her soul may be keener to detect your wiles. At the end of her probation if you can prove your claim

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she will be numbered among your subjects. If not, then Heaven again shall witness your defeat. Begone, Satan."

With strong hope in her heart, the poor soul raised her grateful face now alight with the brightness of a firm and holy purpose. The heavenly court was disappearing in clouds of golden glory. Eagerly her gaze followed the figure of her Advocate, who, as she turned, bent on her a look of such ineffable sweetness that the joy of it remained forever.

* * * * *

There are people still alive who talk about the "Blind Singer" of St. Jerome's. The first Sunday on which that soul-stirring voice awoke the echoes of the old cathedral, men sat up in wonderment and women wept, they knew not why. Whence she came none knew save the Rector of St. Jerome's. None save he could explain

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the strange sweet power of that voice that softened the hardest hearts and moved obdurate sinners to repentance. Experts from far and near came to hear her. Small fortunes were offered to her if she would sing elsewhere, but she declined them all with the answer: "It is God's gift, and in His service only will I use it."

But if the "mountain could not go to Mohammed, Mohammed could go to the mountain," and every Sunday found St. Jerome's crowded. Then came the memorable day when the members of the Royal household made a pilgrimage to the old cathedral.

The inhabitants of B—— love to tell of that splendid gathering, of the gaily attired courtiers and the glittering panoply that accompanied the king. In striking contrast was the slim form of a girl clad in black kneeling in an obscure

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corner near the great organ. Her sightless eyes were turned, as if by instinct, on the little golden door of the tabernacle. It needed not the evidence of her moving lips and joined hands to convince the numbers who saw the silent figure that the great triumph in store for her was far from her thoughts.

Spellbound the great congregation listened to those notes that seemed to come from heaven itself. Indeed, it was afterwards whispered that the last effort of the blind girl was not of the earth, for never had mortal ear listened to such harmony as was heard in "The Magnificat" that eventful day at St. Jerome's.

So wrapt was every one in the sweet strains, that none noticed the singer herself, as extending her arms and raising her face heavenward she sang the concluding doxology: *Gloria Patri et Filio*

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et Spiritu Sancto. Up to the last note the magnificent voice rang out clear and true, then with a little gasp she sank to the floor — and the voice was silent forever.

Tenderly they bore her from the organ loft, as she had been borne once before from the edge of the cheated river. But this time there was no dream or vision, no veiled faces or dull echo of leaden leaves. Instead, there was the glad reality of the star-crowned Queen coming to greet her with outstretched arms, while the celestial choir sang in triumph the response to her last words on earth: *Sicut erat in principio et nunc et semper et in saecula saeculorum.*

A Sick Call from Heaven

IT was Christmas Eve. The good priest of Stockford had finished the duties incident to the great feast of the morrow. The little church was resplendent in green festoons tastefully arranged and pretty draperies. The altar had been, for the nonce, converted into a veritable bower of sweet-smelling orchids, standing out in strong relief against a background of rich, dark green, with colored lamps and star-bedecked tapers, which on the morrow would shed a soft effulgence on the festive surroundings.

These preparations, followed by a long period in the confessional, had told on the energy of Father Harper, so that it was with a sigh of thankfulness that he closed

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his well-thumbed breviary and prepared to take his long-deferred rest. Alas for the plans of tired pastors! The tyrannical door-bell sent its imperious summons through the silent house, causing the priest to hastily readjust his cassock and descend to meet his midnight visitor. On opening the door he was mildly surprised to see a young man, a stranger, of refined appearance and courteous bearing, awaiting an answer to his ring.

Father Harper invited the youth to enter.

"There is no time, Father. It is an urgent sick call."

In a few hurried words he explained that a poor woman of the unfortunate class lay dying in a locality which had long been a source of righteous anger to the priest and a defiance to the civil authorities.

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“But, my young man,” objected Father Harper, “you must be aware that the place you mention is not safe for a Christian to traverse in daylight, much less for a Catholic priest at midnight. Moreover, the people who live there are beyond the pale of my jurisdiction, since they have long ago sold themselves to the devil.”

“This woman is an exception, Father, and it is now a question of a soul to be saved or lost. I promise that no disrespect will be shown to Him whom you shall bear, nor to your own person.”

The stranger had used the most powerful argument, “a soul to be saved or lost,” and the zealous pastor could no longer resist the appeal. Then, too, there was something in the tone of the stranger which the priest afterwards described as “irresistible and assuring.” His fears somewhat allayed, he hurried to secure

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the Holy Viaticum, and in a few moments he was ready to accompany his guide. The young man with head bowed walked a few paces in advance. Thus they proceeded to their destination, a large tenement situated in a narrow, ill-smelling street, the wretchedness of which even the inky blackness of the night could not fully conceal.

The second floor of this tenement had been converted into a large hall, the area of the building in extent. It was now brightly illuminated and occupied by a mob of coarse revelers, whose loud laughter and rude jibes reached the ears of the priest and his attendant at the door below.

"We must pass through that hall to reach the floor above, where the dying woman lies," whispered the young man. Then added, as the priest was about to protest, "Be not afraid. He whom you

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carry will see you safely through." Again the pastor experienced that strange sense of security which had drawn him to accompany his guide, as with a fervent prayer for protection he ascended the dimly lit stairway.

At the top of the stairs the progress was barred by a closed door, from behind which the sounds of revelry issued, thus indicating that it closed the entrance to the hall already mentioned. This door the young man opened without warning, thereby exposing to view such a scene of debauchery as the eyes of Father Harper had never before witnessed. The hall was supplied with numerous tables, at which were seated groups of men and women whose boisterous conduct indicated the class to which they belonged.

The good priest felt his heart sicken, not so much from fear for his personal

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safety as from the thought of exposing the Blessed Sacrament to the possibility of insult from that riotous gathering. He knew that he would be justified in turning back, and was even about to do so when his guide bent upon him such a look of mingled entreaty and reassurance that he felt as if some invisible power was drawing him onward.

They threaded their way among the tables, the priest on the alert for — he knew not what; but not a head was raised nor a look of inquiry met his gaze throughout the entire journey. The priest marveled at the strangeness of it, the more so as he was in some instances obliged to almost brush against the occupants seated at certain tables. He breathed more freely when he had passed through another door, which admitted him to a stairway leading to the rooms above. At

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the door of one of these rooms the guide stopped. Knocking lightly, he opened the door and signed to the priest to enter.

Father Harper could not at first clearly discern the objects in the room, so dimly were they illumined by the feeble rays of the smoky lamp which rested on the mantel. Little by little, however, his eyes became accustomed to the gloom, until he could see the wretchedness of the place. An inverted flour barrel in the center of the room served as a table. An old tin trunk, hopelessly battered, occupied an obscure corner. Two decrepit chairs and a rickety-looking bed completed the furnishings. The priest crossed the ill-swept floor to the bed, upon which lay the form of the dying woman, covered with a ragged counterpane, and gazed at the apparently sleeping sufferer. She was near middle age and had doubtless

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been handsome in her youth, but a disorderly life had rendered her features coarse and repulsive.

Having read her sad history in her face, Father Harper made known his presence. The woman opened her eyes and looked incomprehensively at the priest. At length she demanded in tones as angry as her feeble condition would permit:

“Who are you? What brought you here?”

“I am a Catholic priest and your messenger brought me to you.”

“I did not send for you.”

“Some of your friends must have done so.”

She laughed bitterly. “My friends. Ha! ha! I have no friends! I crawled in here to die like a dog. Friends, indeed!”

The priest was puzzled. “Does not some one know of your condition?” he asked.

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"No, I've lain here three days waitin' to die, and you're the first to trouble me. You'd better go."

"Are you a Catholic?"

"No — that is, I suppose I was wunst, long years ago, but now I'm nuthin' — worse than nuthin'. I lived a life of shame this many a year. I'm worse than nuthin' now. You'd better go."

While she was speaking she partially raised herself, and in so doing exposed her neck, around which, to his great surprise, Father Harper saw the well-worn ribbon of a brown scapular.

"You still wear the scapulars," he said gently.

A change came over the hardened features, a softer look stole into the fever-lit eyes, and the voice that answered was not the voice of a heartless outcast.

"My mother put 'em there the night

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before I sailed. I wore 'em ever since. 'Tis all I have of her."

She was crying now, and Father Harper waited a few minutes before he said, "My child, your mother's scapulars were your messenger to me to-night. She whom even you honor by wearing them has once more shown her love for those who wear her livery by sending me to your death-bed at the eleventh hour. I believe that a miracle has been wrought in your favor through the intercession of your loving Mother, Mary, who has heard the prayers of your own good mother for her wayward girl."

As the poor woman listened to the consoling words of the priest her tears flowed more abundantly and when he had ceased speaking she sobbed, "Oh, Father, there can be no hope of pardon for the likes of me."

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The priest's task might now be accomplished. He dwelt at length on the love of Jesus for sinners, on the mercy He shows them, the joy with which Heaven hails a penitent. Soon the outcast declared herself ready to receive the last sacraments. It was, however, a supreme effort, and having received the Viaticum with all the dispositions of a Magdalen, the redeemed soul of the poor exile went forth to meet the babe of Bethlehem.

With a parting prayer and eyes dim with tears, Father Harper gently drew the counterpane over the dead face, which, even in that brief period of repentance, had regained much of its youthful beauty.

The good priest had now to return by the way he had come, but so convinced was he that this sick call came from Heaven that he had no hesitation in repassing the tables at which most of the merry-makers

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were still seated. Again the same indifference to his presence, the same looks beyond him and through him but not at him. He reached home as the sun was reddening in the horizon, yet he was not too tired to make an early morning visit to the Crib. As he knelt in thanksgiving, the face of the Divine Infant seemed to grow to the proportions and similitude of his strange young guide, and from the smiling lips he seemed to hear the words: *Euge! Euge! servus fidelis. Gloria in excelsis Deo.*

The Mission of a Bookmark

FATHER BRICE seated himself in the Pullman with a sigh of relief. He had spent the best part of the last hour consulting time-tables that presented as many complications as his first book of Xenophon. Finally, he had extracted from the maze of figures, stars, daggers and cabalistic signs, the comforting assurance that he was due to reach Musever before sunset — that is, if they had sunset in Musever.

Father Brice was newly ordained, and Musever was his first appointment. He refused to be discouraged when he was gleefully told by his classmates, that in this remote corner of the vineyard, he would be “far from the madding crowd,”

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disturbed only by the "drowsy tinklings" of the home-coming buffalo. His congregation were to be, "jes plain folk," who knew the almanac's signs of the zodiac better than the ten commandments.

He was smiling now as he thought of that brilliant series of carefully prepared sermons on the theandrical attributes of Homo-Christus, to preach any one of which to his future parishioners would call forth a postal to the bishop telling him that "the new parson is a little teched."

While these thoughts were passing through his mind he became suddenly aware that he was being minutely scrutinized by the occupant of the opposite chair. Risking the propriety of it, he looked across, and his suspicions were confirmed when his glance encountered the saddest, brightest pair of eyes he had ever seen. "Eyes of most unholy blue,"

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— he would have described them. And yet —

Fresh from the seminary, Father Brice was, from a practical viewpoint, devoid of experience with sin or suffering. Theoretically, he was conversant with every phase of both. Here was his first lesson in the application of the abstract of the classroom, to the concrete of the world. Within speaking distance was a young woman, evidently wealthy and cultured, with the face of a madonna but with the eyes of a lost soul.

He was too true a logician to argue that temporal endowments, even of a high order, were necessarily indicative of peace of mind. His comforting philosophy, nevertheless, received a shock when he looked into those sadly bright eyes and intuitively read in their depths the wild plea of a stricken soul.

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It was not incompatible, he told himself, but unusual; and the strangeness of it disturbed the preconceived ideas of the young moralist. It never occurred to him that he had misinterpreted that half-appealing, half-defiant glance. Contrary to his usual cold reasoning, he simply *felt* that his diagnosis was correct.

Nevertheless he tried to dismiss the circumstance from his mind and to occupy himself with his breviary, but force his attention as he would, the thought of the troubled soul near him brought distractions to his priestly heart. Mindful of the devotion required at the "office" he shut his breviary rather impatiently, without noticing that one of his bookmarks fell from the leaves, fluttered across the aisle, and settled at the feet of the young lady whose presumed "status quo" had interrupted the reading.

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The bookmark was a little ordination gift which he had received from Sister St. Rose, with the request to keep it in his breviary for a special intention. Stooping, the young lady picked it up and gazed earnestly at the subject, — the Immaculate Conception, beautifully executed in oils on a strip of silk. Below the design was the inscription, "Refuge of Sinners, pray for us!" Again Father Brice's attention was attracted by something that sounded like a sob. He saw his cherished bookmark in the stranger's hand, and even as he looked she raised it to her lips and kissed it passionately. A moment later there was a horrible grinding noise followed by a terrific crash, and Father Brice was hurled from his seat and rendered almost senseless by the impact of his body against the framework of the car.

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Stunned and bleeding he extricated himself from the débris of shattered glass and splintered timber. His first thought was of self-preservation, but it was scarcely born when a feeble "Father" banished it, to give place to the instinct of the priest.

Painfully making his way toward the sound, he exerted his waning strength to remove the heavy timber from under which the voice had come. There she lay in all the pride of raiment and beauty, crushed and broken beyond all hope. Only one little hand was free, and tightly held within the clutched fingers was the silken miniature of Mary Immaculate.

Then, amidst the shrieks of the wounded, the crackling beams and blinding smoke — mystery of love — a boyish head was bowed to hear the story of another Magdalen. A boyish face, like to the blood-

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stained Face on Veronica's towel, was illumined by a glad light which found reflection in a pair of dying eyes that opened to emit its glorious radiance before the throne of God.

* * * * *

When Father Brice recovered consciousness, the presence of Sister St. Rose at his bedside brought home to his confused brain the fact that he was an inmate of the Sisters' hospital.

"How long have I been here, Sister?" was his first question.

"Nearly two weeks, Father. We have been making a novena for your recovery, and I have just been praying that you would wake up in your right reason. Thank God, the favor is granted."

"Thank God," he repeated.

His thoughts were still uncertain. Little by little, however, the awful scene of the

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wreck dawned on him, and when he remembered the great miracle of mercy and pardon he had witnessed again he re-echoed, but with fuller consciousness:

“Thank God.”

“How many were killed, Sister?”

“Two men and — a girl, Father.”

“Tell me about the girl — but why are you crying?”

“She was not fit to die, Father.”

“You knew her then?”

“She was my youngest sister,” came the low response. After a brief silence Sister St. Rose resumed: “She went on to the stage and her remarkable success blinded her to her duties as a Catholic. You have doubtless heard men speak of *La Belle Reine*?”

Father Brice nodded. She was the greatest actress of the day, the talk of two continents.

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“She was *La Belle Reine*, — my sister. I wrote many appealing letters to her, but with no effect. In the last one I sent her a duplicate of the bookmark I painted for you, and begged for an interview. She was on her way to me when —”

Again her voice broke. Father Brice waited. Controlling her emotion the Sister continued:

“She was crushed beyond recognition, but I identified her by the little bookmark which was clasped in her dead fingers.”

As Sister St. Rose ceased speaking the wonder of it all dawned on Father Brice. The little ribbon of silk that had flown to the feet of the famous actress bearing on its white surface the mute appeal of a sister saint for a sister sinner, had at last touched the heart of the wayward girl. The duplicate which she had received had

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doubtless been tossed aside after an impatient glance: when lo! hundreds of miles away, its counterpart had flown to her from a priest's breviary. The nun's love was surely storming Heaven for the "baby" sister. The sob, the tears and ardent kiss which had greeted the second advent of the little messenger were explained.

"The inscription on the bookmark, Sister, 'Refuge of Sinners, pray for us?'" gently questioned Father Brice.

"It was my hourly ejaculation for her conversion, and I cannot believe that in those terrible last moments the prayer was denied."

It seemed to Sister St. Rose that the next words were not spoken by Father Brice, but came from a large picture of the Immaculate Conception above his bed.

"Thanks to the Refuge of Sinners and

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your oft-repeated prayer, I can assure you that mercy was not denied. I was at her side before she died."

Sister St. Rose fell on her knees in silent thanksgiving. When she arose, her face was radiant with the light of a faith that had been sorely tried but had never faltered. The reward for her loving confidence had come with the assurance that the soul for which she had pleaded had gone forth, bidding farewell to earth in a dying whisper which was caught up by waiting angels, and sung in triumph of their Queen.

Even now its joyful strain is wafted earthward, and finds glad echo in the heart of Sister St. Rose.

"Refuge of Sinners, pray for us!"

Golgotha to Olivet

THERE was a new hand at the big stitching machine in the shirtwaist factory of Bain & Brown. Her fellow-workers "sized her up" with experienced eyes. The scrutiny settled two important facts: she was pretty and she knew how to dress. The relaxation of the lunch hour added two more items to her "personnel": she was Irish, and a Catholic. Not that she had volunteered the information, but a slight musical brogue betrayed the one, and a medal of the Blessed Virgin attached to a gold chain which she wore around her neck was sufficient evidence of the other.

The newcomer could not but be conscious of the curiosity she excited, yet

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beyond what had been learned from her dress and manner nothing more was forthcoming. There was an air of reserve about her that kept the inquisitive at a distance.

As the days wore on her studious avoidance of "chum" confidences gradually incurred the resentment of a certain few who took the reserve as a personal affront. By them her natural refinement was misinterpreted as affectation, and as a consequence, uncharitable whispers were circulated.

A new interest was added to the situation at this juncture. Miss Molly Dean, the new hand, became an object of very evident concern to Harvey Stokes, the young superintendent of the stitching department. The circumstances became more pointed from the fact that the superintendent rarely spoke to any of the girls.

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When obliged to do so, it was done in a crisp business tone that precluded all thought of sentiment.

But with Molly it was different. At first there were only short talks during odd moments when chance brought them together. But one day at lunch hour Molly was seen giving him a neatly covered package having the dimensions of a box of chocolates! A few days after this incident, as the superintendent was passing by Molly's machine, one of the girls heard him say, "I will call to-night."

It was only natural that Lena Davis, the fore woman on the floor below, should hear of the danger threatening her domain in the affections of Harvey Stokes. It had been rumored that they were engaged and Lena had looked non-committal when challenged about it. Lena was an orphan. A Catholic by birth, she had grown to

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womanhood with little thought of her religion. True, she had made her First Communion, but it had also been her last — though at times the sweet memory of it awakened something like a desire for its renewal. Proud and sensitive she had listened to the gossip of the “doin’s” upstairs, but she had merely tossed her pretty head and smiled. However, she could not help thinking and she thought fiercely.

One morning Harvey passed her without his usual greeting; he seemed to have something on his mind and to be too pre-occupied to see her. Vengeful thoughts began to gather under the coils of dark, glossy hair, hair that was at once the pride of its owner and the envy of her companions. At the dinner hour these thoughts took definite shape, and the look in Lena’s eyes was not good to see as she ascended

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to the floor above. When she entered the room she discovered the object of her search seated near a window, reading a book. Without answering any of the girls' salutations she walked with a determined step directly to the place where Molly was seated. Without apology and in a voice that attracted the attention of all in the room she said sharply:

"This is Miss Molly Dean, I presume?"

Molly lowered her book, and looked up with a surprised expression as she answered:

"Yes, that is my name."

"Mine is Lena Davis, and I came to tell you that if you don't want that doll face of yours spoiled for life you'd better stop flirting with other people's property."

Molly's face grew white, and the book fell unnoticed to the floor.

"What — what do you mean by this insult?" she gasped.

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“Oh, ho! Listen to her, girls.” They were now surrounded by all the girls on the floor. “Listen to Innocence on a monument. She has the nerve to ask my meaning when every one in the factory knows she is doing her best to get Harvey Stokes for a lover.”

It was a brutal statement even from the lips of a passion-blinded woman, and it was followed by a silence that was certainly not applause.

Molly arose. Pale as an alabaster statue yet not with the pallor of fear she faced her angry accuser. “Miss Davis,” she answered in a voice marvelously calm, “it is a foul, calumnious lie. You need only to ask Mr. Stokes to learn the truth.”

This reference to Harvey Stokes in the capacity of a vindicator enraged Lena beyond all self-control, and before any one suspected her purpose, she struck the

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pale face a stinging blow with her open palm.

For a moment the hot Irish blood of Molly's warlike ancestors welled up in passionate protest — a small clenched hand flew to the swelling throat, as if to tear away the little gold chain that seemed to impede the rebellious flood — but there came a change. The clenched hand had touched the medal of the Blessed Virgin, fastened to the chain. The fingers closed around it, and Molly with a cry of "Oh Blessed Mother!" burst into tears.

The strained situation was relieved. The sight of familiar tears touched a common chord of feeling that found expression in gently encircling arms and soft-spoken words of sympathy. Lena, after some wild words of self-justification, returned to her floor, her head high, her mind in a tumult.

Soon after, the whistle announcing the

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end of the dinner hour was sounded and work was resumed as if nothing unusual had occurred. But every one knew intuitively that something more was to follow, though what, or whence, no one could define. The air of the upper floor was heavy with foreboding, but no one was prepared for the horrible sound that came up suddenly from the lower room. It was a scream of deadly terror emitted by over fifty girls, yet sounding as if from one throat.

“Lena Davis is killed!” was the startling news that flashed through the building. Many of the girls fainted, but their stronger sisters hastened to give what assistance they could.

More careless than usual, Lena had attempted to pass under the huge driving belt by which the machines were operated, but she had not stooped low enough and her hair had been caught by the rapidly

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moving wheel. In an instant she was partially scalped and hurled halfway across the room.

The hastily summoned doctor pronounced her still alive and ordered her removal to the hospital. Further examination brought the assurance that the injured girl would recover if given careful treatment. During the long period of convalescence that followed Molly was a constant visitor at the bedside of the sufferer. In the beginning she was coldly received, but she made herself so useful in a thousand little ways that the sick girl's pride was gradually overcome by her devotedness. Then, too, Lena was becoming more and more convinced that she had wronged the sweet little Samaritan, although there had been no explanations asked or offered. Lena's moral code was based on rather indefinite principles, but

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she knew sufficient to conclude that a girl who went almost daily to Holy Communion, and who spent most of her spare time in the church, could not be guilty of the charges she had made against her.

At last this conviction became so strong in Lena's mind and remorse so keen that she determined to make reparation at the very next opportunity. She looked forward eagerly to Molly's next visit — but Molly came not. Instead came two letters and a small package. One letter read: "Good-bye, dear Lena. I am called away suddenly. For my sake and more for Our Lady's sake, wear the little souvenir I am sending you, and pray often for your happy, happy friend, Molly." The package contained a medal of the Blessed Virgin attached to a fine gold chain. The other letter was from a "chum," and contained the news that Harvey Stokes had

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left town. Then blackness settled down on the soul of Lena Davis.

When Lena returned to work two weeks later the first person she encountered was Harvey Stokes. She tried to avoid him but he stood directly in her path. There was a world of contempt in the tone with which she uttered: "Let me pass, please."

"Not till I have an explanation, Lena," he firmly answered. "You have persistently refused to see me and returned all my letters without any apparent reason for doing so. What does it all mean?"

"You are not married, then?" said Lena in a curious tone.

"Married!" echoed Harvey. "Whatever put that idea in your head?"

"You left town the same day that Miss Dean went," faltered Lena.

"Oh, you little goose," laughed Harvey. "I left town to bury my Uncle Phil, who

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died two weeks ago. As for Miss Dean she left so suddenly after receiving the check that no one knows where she went."

"Check? I don't understand ——"

"Why, the five thousand dollars from Bain & Brown. Did she not tell you about her good fortune?"

Lena was too surprised to speak; she merely shook her head.

"Well, to begin at the beginning," said Harvey, "when Miss Dean came to our factory I soon found out that she knew more than the average girl about the mechanism of sewing machines. We had several little talks together along those lines. One day she came to me at lunch hour, and asked me to look at a little model which she had made from her own ideas. I took the little box home — but what is the matter?" he broke off abruptly, for Lena was crying.

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“It is nothing. Please go on,” answered Lena.

“I was greatly interested in the design,” he continued, “for it was a combination of needle and tucker which would produce perfect precision in delicate work. When I carried it back to her lodgings, I told her it was worth money. Acting on my advice she had it patented and the firm bought it for the price named.”

“I am so glad — so glad,” repeated Lena as if to herself.

“But why are you crying so?” questioned the perplexed Harvey, with a man’s usual lack of perception.

“Did you never hear of tears of joy?” smiled Lena through her tears, and he was satisfied. That night Lena wore the little medal of Our Lady for the first time.

It was about a year later and not long

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after her marriage to Harvey Stokes that Lena received her next news of Molly. She had completed her novitiate with the Little Sisters of Suffering, and was to be professed the following week. The letter was a long one and moved Lena deeply, especially when Molly wrote: ‘‘You know, dear, I always wanted to be a nun, but when my only brother died in Ireland the duty of bread-winning fell on me. Father was an invalid, and, besides, the little farm was mortgaged. It was a hard cross, and I bore it none too well during those bitter years that I worked so hard as a stitcher. All my earnings went to pay the mortgage, and thus secured small hope that I should ever have my dream come true. But, I prayed and prayed, that God would find a way. You know how my prayers were answered. The old people are comfortable for life — the mortgage is paid,

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the little home saved, and I am soon to be a spouse of Christ. God bless you, dear! Come to my profession if you can."

Lena laid down the letter, the "tidings of great joy" which had brought peace to her soul. Kneeling, she unfastened Molly's parting gift from around her neck, and as if addressing the graven image on the medal she said:

"It is to you, Blessed Mother, that I owe all, my escape from death, my own and my husband's conversion, and now — the one thing needed to complete my happiness — this message of peace and pardon from her who awakened my love for the good and pure, the little Irish saint, who brought me back to the feet of Mary Immaculate."

* * * * *

As Molly Dean came down the aisle of the convent chapel, on her Profession

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morning, it seemed to the few privileged visitors that her transfigured countenance and beautiful white habit could not belong to a dweller of the earth. So thought Lena as she gazed with misty eyes on the lovely vision, and felt her last salute as the brush of an angel's wing on her burning cheek. So thought Molly, too, perhaps, as she thus severed the last link of the cruel past, and passed on behind the curtained lattice to Olivet.

Sister Benizia's Début

I DO not like to send you, Sister Benizia, but there is no one else available," said Reverend Mother Cyril, of the Little Sisters of the Suffering, to her youngest nun.

"It will not be so hard for me, Mother, especially when I remember that it is a work done for love of God."

"True, my child, that is the only thought that gives us strength for these begging missions. So then, my dear, your first real work as a Little Sister is an act of deep humiliation. I would have it otherwise, but the illness of Sister Rose and the absence of Sister Agnes leave me no choice. I am even obliged to take Sister Katherine from her beloved 'cheeky chicks,' as she calls the little boys under her care. As

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for you," she concluded with a twinkle in her kind eyes, "your patients in the hospital ward will appreciate you more for an afternoon's absence. Go to Sister Katherine and she will tell you whatever is necessary."

Sister Benizia smiled at the Reverend Mother's little joke and hurried away to the playground of the orphanage, where she knew Sister Katherine would be at that hour.

It was the rule for two sisters to go each week to the pay-offices of the large electric company of the city and take up their positions near the paymaster's window, there to receive whatever alms the employees of the company chose to give them. Heretofore the two oldest sisters had been charged with this duty, but this week the burden had fallen on younger shoulders.

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Sister Benizia was but a short time professed, and, although she helped in the hospital, had not yet been assigned to any definite charge. She was little more than a child, with a face so sweet and vivacious, yet withal so holy, that a mere glance at it made one feel the purity of the soul that animated its lovely lines. At this moment, however, the usually bright face was clouded, for its owner began to feel timid about the, to her, formidable task she had so cheerfully accepted. The child of wealthy parents, she had never been obliged to ask for anything. Of course, in the novitiate she used to ask for whatever she needed, but it was so easy to approach the kind Mistress of Novices that very little courage was required. This was something altogether different. Instead of the privacy of the novitiate she would be on the public street and the

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Mistress of Novices would be substituted by a long line of men, who, she had heard, were not always overpleased to see the Sisters.

The nun compared her doubts to the feelings of a young soldier on the eve of his first battle. Would she be brave and perform her duty without flinching, or would she flee and leave Sister Katherine alone on the firing line? This last reflection brought back the smile to her eyes, for the idea of running away like a naughty child had its humorous aspect for the professed nun.

On entering the playground she saw Sister Katherine busily engaged in umpiring a game of baseball between two "picked nines" from the "cheeky chicks." While Sister Benizia waited to attract the "umpire's" attention, she was amused to hear her call out in professional tones:

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"Strike three. You're out, Jimmy."

"Oh, say, Sister," protested Jimmy.

"Good eye, Sister," yelled the catcher.

"'Twas an inshoot and cut the corner of the plate," explained the "umpire" to the dubious Jimmy. Then, seeing Sister Benizia, she hastened across the playground to meet her.

"I have come, Sister Katherine," began the younger nun, "to tell you that I am to accompany you this afternoon, and to ask you just what I am to do."

Sister Katherine, smiling a little at the almost tragic note in her voice, gave her a few plain instructions, after which she assured her that the proposed expedition was in reality a simple affair. Sister Katherine was one who made herself "all things to all" with such effect that those who were the objects of her solicitude invariably went away happier for having ex-

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perienced it. Thus it was that Sister Benizia left her with her doubts dispersed and in their stead a firm resolve "to do or die."

Three o'clock found the two Sisters at their post of duty. Sister Katherine, tall and commanding, seemed quite at ease, but her companion, in spite of her brave resolution, could not effectually conceal the timidity which at times betrayed itself in the tremor of the little hand, which she was obliged to extend to receive the proffered alms. Sister Katherine understood and conveyed her sympathy in low-voiced words of encouragement.

The long line of employees was growing less. Generally, as each one received his envelope he opened it and gave the small change it contained to one or the other of the Sisters. The men were all in good humor, and as many of them knew Sister Katherine, who had been there often be-

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fore, they respectfully saluted her, either with a "Good day, Sister," or an inquiry about the absent Sisters.

But none had ventured to address Sister Benizia until one great lumbering youth suddenly leaned toward her and whispered something close to her ear. Immediately the pale oval face crimsoned, even to the white fillet that encircled the forehead; the long eyelashes were raised with a painful quiver, and big "Hank" encountered a look of mingled pain and reproach that he never forgot.

Pat Daley was next in line, and, while he did not catch the whisper, he saw the flaming protest on the little Sister's face. No Catholic — much less a quick-tempered one, who called Ireland "home" — could stand idly by and see a helpless nun insulted. It was too much.

"You coward, take that!"

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It was done in an instant. The large form of "Hank" dropped like a stricken ox before the powerful blow. In its fall the head struck a nearby hydrant, and the big fellow lay white and still upon the sidewalk. At once all was excitement. Some rushed away to find a doctor; others carried the apparently dead man into the office of the paymaster, who telephoned to the Sisters' Hospital for the ambulance.

Meanwhile the two Sisters were using all their trained efforts to restore the man to consciousness and had succeeded when the doctor arrived. He pronounced the wound dangerous, and ordered that the injured man be taken to the hospital in all haste. A crowd had gathered. When the circumstances of the accident were explained, murmurs of "Served him right" and expressions of similar sentiments took the place of words of pity.

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Two months later "Hank" left the hospital completely cured. During those two months strange things had happened to the big "down-east'er." The look that Sister Benizia had given him haunted him continually, but at the same time it roused the latent good in him, at the expense, however, of a remorse, the sting of which made him long to repair the insult he had offered to the Sister.

He saw her every day while he lay in the ward, whither her duties called her. Whenever she passed his bed she always gave him a kind smile or dropped a cheery word. Little did she dream that her kindness was a species of cruelty, inasmuch as she was thus "heaping coals of fire" on the head of the remorseful "Hank." One day as she was passing he called her to his bedside and told her that he could never feel forgiven unless she permitted

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him to do something by way of expiation. He owned a farm in Maine. Would she take that? He had a nice bay pony. Would little Sister accept it as a present? No?

She gently told him that she could not receive any presents, but, seeing his disappointment, she added that she would tell him before he left what he might do. It was something, she said, of which the accomplishment would always make her glad that he — that the accident had happened. “Hank” declared himself satisfied, and from that moment he improved so rapidly that he was soon pronounced fit to return to work.

The morning of his departure he anxiously waited for Sister Benizia to finish her duties before seeing him in the waiting-room. At length she came in, carrying a little book in her hand, and, having an-

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swered some questions of an old lady near the door, she crossed the room to where he stood. Handing him the book she said:

“Take this as a remembrance of your stay at the hospital and, if you can do so in conscience, follow its teaching. As for my request,” she added, coloring slightly, “I have written it on the blank page. If you will do what it requires, be assured that nothing else you might do could afford me greater pleasure. Good-bye, and don’t forget the doctor’s instructions.”

“Good-bye, little Sister,” was all he could answer.

With a parting smile she was gone, but not before noticing that he was struggling to keep back tears.

When “Hank” had reached his lodgings and answered the polite inquiries of his landlady, he went to his room and reverently drew the Sister’s parting gift from

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his pocket. It was a simple work destined to guide those who wished to inquire about the Catholic religion. But the part that interested him most was the few lines of writing on the blank page. Those he read again and again, until at last he understood the full significance of the Sister's request. Dropping to his knees, he then and there resolved to do all that she asked. Never was a promise more nobly kept.

* * * * *

Years passed and in their passage marked the inevitable changes in the affairs of men. The Little Sisters of the Suffering, too, paid their tribute to the inexorable law of mutability. Mother Cyril was dead. Sister Katherine had been transferred to a larger sphere of activity. Sister Benizia is superioress of the house in which she was professed.

The duties of the new superioress were

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arduous, and often of such a nature as to sorely try her patience. Such was the case now, for the directors' board of the electric company had decided not to permit the Sisters to collect alms at their offices. Mother Benizia had written in the name of charity to the millionaire president, a good Catholic and noted for his philanthropy, asking that he rescind the order of the board. Much to her surprise she received a curt refusal. She had just laid down the letter when the porteress brought in a visiting card on which was inscribed, H. J. Wainwright, President of the Electric Company.

The Reverend Mother, hoping that the president had repented of his harshness, went quickly to the parlor to receive him. He arose and bowed as she entered, then began rather abruptly:

“It is my personal wish, Reverend

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Mother, that your Sisters should not be allowed to beg at our pay offices. My motive for thus acting is purely to save these refined ladies from a task necessarily disagreeable."

"Your motive is commendable, sir, but I will answer for my Sisters that they would rather suffer such humiliation than that our little orphans should be deprived of the necessities which those alms secured."

"I have seen to it," he replied, "that your little charges shall not suffer by the change. Through the generosity of my associates, I can assure you of a settled annuity of more than treble the amount of your former annual income from this source. Moreover, I have placed a sum to your credit that will enable you to build a new hospital, which I have learned is your dearest wish."

For a moment Mother Benizia was

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silent. Then in a voice that trembled a little she said:

“Mr. Wainwright, I have heard wonderful reports of your public-spirited beneficence, but I never imagined that it would reach such heights of charity. In the name of our order, our charges, my Sisters and myself, I thank you with all my heart.”

“No thanks are due to me, but to a Sister of your order, to whose purity and goodness I owe all — my faith, my manhood and my wealth. She it is who inspired me to do whatever I have accomplished. She taught me a lesson that I have never forgotten.”

Taking a small book from his pocket, he continued, “This, my most cherished possession, is her little text-book, and if it could speak it would tell Mother Benizia that ‘Hank’ has kept his promise.”

The Reverend Mother took the extended

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volume, and a mist gathered before her
eyes as she read on the fly-leaf the faded
inscription in her girlhood's handwriting:

To "Hank,"

from Sister Benizia,

Who asks that he will ever be

A man — as men are known —

With heart for kindred, hand for toil,

And soul for God alone.

Vita Pro Vita

A SCARLET card was affixed to the door of No. 14 Kearney Court. The harmless piece of pasteboard might be deemed some modern death-dealing device, were one to judge its significance from the accelerated pace of the passers-by the moment they first caught sight of the little red square. True, red is ever a color to irritate the nerves of man or beast, be the former a rabid anarchist or the latter a peaceful gobbler. But this particular red possessed the additional characteristic of exciting fear. The timid souls who rushed by the branded cottage lived in a hygienic age, and had direful knowledge of bacteriology.

Some such thoughts as these seemed to

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pass through the mind of the sick man who lay within the quarantined dwelling, for he asked in querulous tones: "Is no one permitted to come near the place, Jennie?"

"No, dear," answered the young wife, gently. "We are isolated by order of the board of health. The doctor says that they are very strict in the matter."

"I know now how those poor wretches of lepers that I saw at Molokai must have felt. I, too, am 'unclean.' Why don't you leave me?" he suddenly asked.

"You would never ask that, Lester, were you not unstrung by your illness," the young wife answered, while her eyes filled with tears. "Did you not tell me that those lepers had wives, too, and that you marveled at their devotedness? Is my conception of wifehood lower than theirs, that I should leave you when I am most needed?"

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“Pardon me, little girl; I was not my right self to question your devotion. But I am selfish in keeping you.”

“It would be selfish of you to deprive me of the pleasure of nursing you,” she made answer, smiling bravely through her tears.

The days passed, and, in spite of loving care, the young artist failed steadily. The doctor suggested that, as a measure of prudence, he should put his spiritual and temporal affairs in order, lest the malady prove fatal.

“My temporal affairs,” the patient replied, “are bounded by the four walls of this house. I have no one to mourn for me save my wife, and nothing to leave but my paints and brushes.”

“But —” the doctor hesitated.

“Out with it, doctor. You are anxious about your bill, and —”

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“My bill will take care of itself, Aubrey. I never fancied the rôle of Shylock,” interrupted the doctor. “I wished merely to know if you care to make any spiritual preparation for the hereafter.”

“Spiritual! Do you believe that there is sufficient ‘spirit’ in a penniless artist to induce a visit from any sleek, well-fed gentleman of the cloth, at the risk of taking this dreadful malady?”

“At least I may notify the minister of your persuasion? He will have prayers offered for you.”

“Thank you for your interest, doctor, but spare yourself the trouble. I have no faith in the twaddle men call religion, and less in the gospel grinders or sky pilots that affect it.”

The doctor rose, then seated himself again as Aubrey resumed:

“One moment, doctor. I make one

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exception to my last remark — the young priest up in Merman square. I once asked him to sit as a model for a St. Anthony which was to hang in the Cathedral. At first he refused, but when he found out that I was an unbeliever, he consented, on condition that he could talk as I worked.”

Aubrey raised himself on his pillows, and, with more good humor than he had yet shown, continued:

“Well, he talked, and I encouraged him — not because his discourse did me any good, but because his manner became so earnest and his expression so ethereal that I felt I could bear such heavenly doctrines as long as they made my model so like my actual subject.”

“I know the young man,” rejoined the doctor. “He is in very delicate health at present. Moreover, I have often met him in a professional way at deathbeds,

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and each time I have been struck anew with the fervor and conviction with which he performed his ministrations."

Aubrey was silent some moments before he said: "It is a selfish thought, but I would like to have that young fellow near me at the last."

"My dear Aubrey," rejoined the doctor, "it is more than selfish, for in his present state two minutes at your bedside would mean certain death for him."

"He is not ascetic enough to pay that price for my soul, I am sure — nor would I have him," Aubrey responded, somewhat bitterly. The doctor again rose, and, after giving some parting directions to Mrs. Aubrey, promised to call the following day, if possible.

During the night the young man became alarmingly worse, and the lone watcher felt that the end was not far off. Soon

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after daylight she heard the door bell, which she supposed announced the doctor's return. Mrs. Aubrey heard her little servant open the door, and a few moments later there was a gentle knock at the door of the sick room. It opened softly, and husband and wife were alike astonished to behold, not the portly form of the doctor, but a tall stranger in clerical dress. He advanced to the bedside and took Aubrey's hand.

"I heard that you were seriously ill, and I thought that you would like to see me."

Aubrey motioned to his wife, and she left the room. Then he turned almost fiercely on the young priest.

"Father Vogt, do you know the penalty you will have to pay for this visit?"

"I do," was the quiet answer.

Aubrey regarded him some moments in silence, then, with slow emphasis on

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each word, asked, "Do you know that you have signed your death-warrant?"

There was no wavering in the blue eyes that looked into the brown ones of the artist. There was no tremor in the firm voice that answered, "I am absolutely certain of it."

Aubrey fell back among the pillows and covered his face with his hands. He seemed to forget the other's presence.

It was some minutes before he again looked at the priest.

"What is your object in making this — this awful sacrifice?"

"I want an opportunity to earn the aureole which you gave me in your portrait of St. Anthony," smilingly rejoined the priest.

"Supposing that I should die as I lived?"

"Even then I should not consider my visit useless. You told me once that you

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were baptized a Catholic, and I consider it a simple duty to try to reconcile you to the Church from which you have wandered. If I do not succeed, my visit will not be in vain, for my duty will have been accomplished."

"Could you not have sent some one for whom the visit would not have such fatal consequences?"

"Possibly, did I not learn from the doctor that you had expressed a distinct wish to see me."

"I don't understand — I can't — let me think a few minutes, please. I am —"

Father Vogt withdrew to a recess in the window, where he occupied himself with his breviary. The light of a new understanding began to dawn on Aubrey, and in the illumination it afforded he was forced to admit that here was something which his sophistry did not dare challenge. A

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concrete, tangible proof of the supernatural against which his cherished materialistic idols were shattered into fragments.

He looked at the kneeling figure, and marked again the features which had first attracted him — the bold, white forehead, the thin, straight nose, the chiseled lips and chin. Such a face and form, combined with his talents, might have won him an enviable place among his fellow-men. Domestic happiness, wealth, renown, might have been his portion, but he had rejected those glittering possibilities, and had chosen instead an obscure corner in Merman square, there to minister to the wants of the poor and wretched.

When the priest knelt, "like some mediæval saint," the artist thought, the morning sunlight lent an added glint of gold to the yellow head bowed in silent prayer for the return of the young life.

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“Father!”

The priest came quickly to the bedside.

“Father, my emotions are beyond expression. I can only say that your devotion has uprooted my life-long convictions, leaving in their place an intense longing to know and love the Master for whom you have given up all.”

This was the moment for which Father Vogt had prayed. Taking the two hands of the sufferer in his own, he spoke so feelingly of the divine mercy and compassion that Aubrey wept, as men weep only when they are intensely moved. The sacrifice was complete: its end attained; and Heaven rejoiced in awarding another penitent's crown, another martyr's palm.

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In the center of the Catholic cemetery at Merman square there is a beautiful marble cross, which marks the last resting

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place of Father Felix Vogt. It is the tribute of a grateful people to a beloved priest.

The Christian symbol casts its shadow on the surrounding graves as if in benediction, but caressingly, protectingly, it seems to linger on one particular grave whose modest headstone bears the inscription:

LESTER AUBREY,

Aged 29 years.

Requiescat in pace.

